BERNARD KNOX: DEAD WHITE EUROPEAN MALES

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Denial will soon set in. But what we have just witnessed in Los Angeles is a glimpse of a racial and urban crisis in this country that is steadily growing in intensity. Neither Republican neglect nor traditional Democratic liberalism comes close to solving it. It's time to start over.

ORS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7.)

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Getting Incentives Right

BY ALBERT SHANKER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Incentives in business are often held up as wonderful examples for schools and especially for the people who work in schools. Look, critics say, if principals and teachers were rewarded for excellent performance and penalized for poor performance—if they were given real incentives the way people in business are—we'd have much better schools. One of the incentives that is most often proposed is merit pay because this kind of thing is said to work so well in the private sector.

I've often spoken in favor of incentives, and I still think they are one of the keys to improving the U.S. education system. But getting incentives right—so they encourage the kind of behavior you want—is a lot harder than most people think. Just look at the recent stories about top executives in big U.S. companies who continue to get astronomical salaries, even when their companies are failing. As a cover story from the *Economist* (Feb. 1-7, 1992) says, some of these people look a lot more like buccaneers than entrepreneurs.

When people talk about financial rewards for merit, they usually think of innovators like Apple Computer's Steve Jobs or Microsoft's Bill Gates who built multi-billion-dollar businesses with their own ideas and energy. But that's not what the *Economist* is talking about: "What grates is the sight of bosses of the biggest firms getting entrepreneurial rewards for doing the job of a corporate bureaucrat."

The theory of financial incentives for people who run a company—as opposed to those who develop a new product or start a business from scratch—is that top executives are more likely to work hard for a company's long-term health and success if they have a financial stake in that success over and above their salary. You might call this a kind of merit pay for CEOs. And in this country, we think that the bigger the stake the more likely top executives are to do their job well.

The incentives offered to U.S. executives usually kick in no matter what kind of job they are doing.

Is this true? They don't think so in Germany and Japan. Top German and Japanese executives are given no added financial incentives to spur them on to success. They also get lower base salaries than American CEOs. And in Japan, top executives make less money in relation to the average worker than their American counterparts: An American CEO's pay is about 85 times more than an average worker's; a Japanese CEO's is 17 to 24 times more.

Furthermore, as the *Economist* tells us, the incentives offered to U.S. executives usually kick in no matter what kind of job they are doing. Take the stock option. This is what causes the sudden bulges in the salaries of top executives. For example, the $86-million paycheck that Roberto Goizueta, the chairman of Coca-Cola, got last year was based largely on stock options. This arrangement authorizes an executive to buy a big chunk of the company's stock at a fixed price—usually the price the day the option was offered—for a certain period of time, like 10 years. If the stock goes up, the executive can sell the stock and pocket the profits without spending any of his own money. If the stock goes down, he can hold on to the option until it runs out. In principle, this gives a top executive an excellent incentive to devote all his energy and creativity to making the company more profitable because it ties a big hunk of money directly to the performance of the company.

In practice, the stock option is often set up so it offers no incentive at all—or the wrong kind of incentive. For example, if you can begin exercising your option in six months and sell all your stock within four years—and the *Economist* says this is common—where's the incentive to work for the long-term health and success of the company? This kind of incentive could even cause a top executive to ignore long-term performance and concentrate on a big splash in the short term, so he could take the money and run.

And what about the stick? If the value of the stock falls instead of rising, a board often simply reissues the option or changes it to allow the executive to buy at a lower price. This is like telling your kid that you'll get him a new car if he keeps a B average—and ground him if he falls below C+—and then getting him the car anyway when he gets a C average.

This is only one of a number of complicated techniques for tying executive compensation to performance, and, according to the *Economist*, none of these executive merit pay schemes works very well. This may be because corporate boards, which are made up mostly of other executives from the company and other heads of companies, are inclined to be sympathetic to one of their own. Or it may be that the *real* incentive for many top executives is figuring out how to get the most out of their incentive plan.

Does this mean incentives don't work? Would Coca-Cola's chairman have done just as much if he had been able to look forward only to $800,000 instead of one hundred times that amount? Some people maintain that you can't buy imagination and leadership—and that big financial incentives are corrupting rather than liberating.

Critics of our schools are right to raise the question of incentives. We can raise exactly the same question about business. And we have a couple of answers already: You can't come along and in five minutes devise some simple incentive structure that will ensure the kind of behavior you want. Getting incentives right is not easy, and even when you do, they require constant monitoring and experimentation. That's as true for business as it is for the schools.

MR. SHANKER'S COMMENTS APPEAR IN THIS AD UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS. READER CORRESPONDENCE IS INVITED. ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO MR. SHANKER AT THE AFT, 555 NEW JERSEY AVE., N.W., WASHINGTON, DC 20001. ©1992 BY ALBERT SHANKER.

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CORRESPONDENCE

It ain't heavy

To the editors:

Undoubtedly, as James Cramer asserts in "Heavy Metal" (April 27), American manufacturing companies are, in general, more profitable than they were in the early 1980s. Cramer is also correct about the reasons for this turnaround: layoffs of tens of thousands of white- and blue-collar workers; the devaluation of the dollar by approximately 50 percent, commencing in 1985; and the global successes of American high-tech companies like Hewlett-Packard.

But these factors have not necessarily improved the standard of living of Americans. The layoffs, for one, have not had a uniformly benign effect. Many American manufacturers had been bloated by overcapacity and excessive bureaucracy; but the wholesale firings of the late 1980s created a small army of unemployed Americans, many of whom are still out of work or else in jobs paying far less than before. American manufacturing companies increased their productivity by an impressive 40 percent during the 1980s. But they simultaneously cut their employment by 10 percent.

Nor has the sharp devaluation of the dollar buoyed American incomes. To the contrary, its effect has been to reduce American living standards, since everything that Americans wish to purchase from the rest of the world is now far more costly than before. It is relatively easy for a nation, as for an individual, to become more "competitive" by charging less and less for the goods and services it produces. But this form of competitiveness also leads to poverty.

Finally, the global successes of many of the American companies to which Cramer refers have been the direct consequence of their becoming less American. More than ever before, American manufacturing companies are utilizing technologies and components produced outside the United States. Most of the innards of Hewlett-Packard's laser-jet printer, for example, come from Japan.

Layoffs, currency devaluations, and off-shore production may lead to the resurgence of American manufacturing, but not to the resurgence of Americans.

ROBERT B. REICH
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the editors:

Let me quickly agree that James Cramer's fundamental thesis is correct: America's manufacturers—the ones that survive—are now more productive and competitive than they were a decade ago. (Although for reasons quite different than the ones he asserts.) But however correct Cramer's conclusions may be, his evidence and examples bear no resemblance to reality.

For example, Cramer says that GE CEO Jack Welch "imitated Japanese corporate style by reducing the company's payroll by 113,000 employees." Even Welch would acknowledge that his style was anything but "Japanese" when he took over GE a decade ago. The overwhelming majority of large Japanese companies take pains to avoid layoffs. Indeed, companies like Nippon Steel and Toray actively try to diversify into new fields precisely in an attempt to help keep their people employed.

Cramer's discussion of U.S. trade competitiveness is similarly off. He argues that the Plaza Accord to devalue the dollar was a nifty idea because it made U.S. goods more price competitive. But then he proudly proclaims that the U.S. share of world manufactured exports went from 12.3 percent in 1985 to 12.7 percent in 1989. That's the New Dominance? That's less than one-tenth of a percent a year. Your hair grows faster than that.

If IBM or General Motors slashed prices more than 20 percent and the market rewarded them with a measly extra tenth-of-a-percent share, I bet "stock picker" Cramer would strongly question just how "competitive" those companies really were. The painful reality is that in value-added high-technology industries ranging from semiconductors to telecommunications, Japan's share of market has grown faster than America's. The ability to tread water does not make one a competitive swimmer.

Cramer points to Hewlett-Packard for "helping to take back leadership in consumer and capital goods." Now, Hewlett-Packard is a terrific company, but it has yet to have any kind of measurable impact in consumer markets. Only a trickle of HP's revenues now comes from consumer products. How do I know this? I asked. Though HP does have ambitious plans to diversify into consumer electronics, a spokesman acknowledges that "we're all talking futures here with this consumer information appliance market."

Cramer claims that former Xerox CEO David Kearns "decided to give up on low-tech photocopying machines in favor of high tech imaging." Wrong. Though it is certainly true that Xerox has made tremendous strides in digital imaging, the fact is that the copier giant was able to recapture the market share once lost to the Japanese in large part because it decided to compete in the low end of the market it had previously ignored.

Competitiveness is a means to an end—not a goal. The goal should be more than boosting the Dow (as Cramer implies); it should be boosting our standard of living (an issue that Cramer doesn't touch).

MICHAEL SCHRAGE
New York, New York

The writer is a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* and a research associate with MIT.

To the editors:

Remarkably, James Cramer gives Reagan policy-makers great credit for their action in 1985 to bring the value of the dollar down to reasonable levels. He fails to mention that those same policy-makers were responsible for the earlier rise in the dollar to unprecedented levels—a macroeconomic folly that resulted in huge losses of world market share for American manufacturers. By Cramer's logic, we should also reward Exxon for its efforts to mop up the oil in Prince William Sound.

Cramer likewise credits Reagan and Bush for reducing the U.S. merchandise trade deficit from $152 billion in 1987 to $66 billion last year. How does he think it got to $152 billion in the first place? The trade deficit grew from $26 billion in 1980 to $152 billion in 1987 under the expert tutelage of Reagan economic gurus. Prior to Reagan-Bush, our country had not experienced two successive years of trade deficit at any time in this century.

Perhaps the pièce de résistance is the argument that U.S. industry showed its strength when companies like Xerox, GE, and Unisys ceded the "low-level consumer electronics industry" to Japan. As he puts it, "Americans have discovered ... that it doesn't make sense to be mindlessly competitive in every area." No doubt Saddam Hussein was following that same clever strategy when he ceded air superiority in the early days of the Persian Gulf war. In the meantime, Japan's "low-level consumer electronics industry" will continue pushing the frontiers of technology and simultaneously generating huge revenues used to pay for future advances.

JEFF BINGAMAN
Washington, D.C.

The writer is a U.S. senator from New Mexico.

To the editors:

I was pleasantly surprised to read James Cramer's "Heavy Metal," which incisively cut through the cacophony of negativism to pinpoint the fundamental, yet largely unreported, transformation of American technology and manufacturing. In years to come, we may find that the economic, political, and social transformations described in Cramer's piece will define the essence of America far better than

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the hackneyed reporting of mainstream business magazines.

JOSEPH ROSENBERG
New York, New York

Visa hell

To the editors:

In "Frontier Justice" (April 13) Robert D. Kaplan tells of his alleged difficulties with the Immigration and Naturalization Service when he returned to the United States after many years with his Canadian-born wife.

Kaplan and others could save themselves money, time, and frustration if they did things right in the first place. Entering the United States in tourist status when you intend to live there permanently is against the law, even if you are a Canadian married to an American for eight years. (It also usually requires you to lie to the INS inspector when you enter, since they will ask how long you plan to stay.) The correct way is to go to an embassy while you are overseas and get an immigrant visa. There is no waiting period for the wife of an American, and the forms cost much less than the $255 paid by Kaplan.

Regarding "The INS Mess": forms and services seem expensive because Congress has decided that users, rather than the American taxpayers, should pay the costs of the service. Most taxpayers probably agree and would applaud the fact that the INS and State Department embassies and consulates overseas earn hundreds of millions of dollars for the U.S. Treasury.

Finally, it is not true that a cancer patient without funds would not be detained whereas an AIDS patient would. There is a provision in the law against becoming a public charge, and the inability to pay medical bills is a factor to be considered, regardless of the disease.

HARRY E. JONES
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
The writer is consul general at the American Embassy, Santo Domingo.

Robert D. Kaplan replies:

What Harry E. Jones claims is obvious is, in reality, a matter of great confusion. For instance, the consular official overseas who advised my wife said that since she was Canadian, there was no need for her to apply beforehand for a visa, since Canadians do not require visas to enter the U.S. Indeed, upon our arrival back in the U.S., an INS official at the airport said my wife now had three months to apply for permanent residence. Finally, my wife, after waiting nearly twelve months, did receive her permanent residence visa last week, allowing her to visit Canada. The INS official who stamped her passport apologized for the delay.

Frontline

To the editors:

Your April 20 Notebook item on "Frontline"'s April 7 broadcast, "Investigating the October Surprise," was rife with errors and without balance. It was written apparently without a single phone call to "Frontline" or any of the individuals attacked.

For the record, Robert Parry was not, as you report, a producer. He was the program's chief reporter. Nor is Parry, by any stretch of the imagination, an "active proponent of the [October Surprise] theory," as you report. As the senior producer at "Frontline" responsible for overseeing the project, I worked closely with Parry for a year and a half, during which time he showed an uncommon degree of objectivity and professionalism. Whereas many other journalists have seemed more interested in taking sides, Parry has remained dispassionate, fair, and kept his attention focused on reporting the story.

BARNES, BLUMENTHAL: NEW YORK PRIMARY HELL
THE NEW REPUBLIC
WE'RE BACK!
The unsung revival of American manufacturing
By James J. Cramer
SPECIAL DEFENSE ISSUE

Your item also incorrectly describes David Marks as "another producer." In fact, Marks was hired early in the project primarily to do some West Coast reporting and had no editorial influence over the documentary. When we began writing and editing, he was no longer even with the project. He is credited under "additional reporting."

You accuse Marks of misrepresenting himself to researcher Peggy Robohm. You appear to rely solely on Robohm's account of this conversation. Your readers should know that Marks flatly denies Robohm's account, a fact that you chose to ignore. As for the "Frontline" interview with Robohm last fall, she willingly agreed to show us the documents she had obtained from Richard Brenneke and to sit down for a taped interview. The "Frontline" documentary includes a segment about those documents and some of Robohm's comments. In the months since that interview, she apparently grew fearful that the documentary would cast her in a bad light. Her fears were totally unfounded.

Finally, Robohm claims she was promised a job on another "Frontline" project but was told that she couldn't have it until she "consented to appear in the October Surprise documentary." But in fact no such condition was ever set. In my last letter to her, I explained that her persistent and baseless attacks on "Frontline" made it impossible to pursue any professional relationship with her. She has construed our reluctance to hire her as "extortion." This is nonsense.

MARTIN SMITH
Boston, Massachusetts
The writer is a senior producer of "Frontline."

The editors reply:

Martin Smith's recollection of the facts is indicative of "Frontline"'s presentation of the "facts" behind the October Conspiracy. Steven Emerson called "Frontline" on March 20 asking for a comment. No one called back. As for Parry's objectivity, over the last few years Parry has uncritically embraced known October Surprise prevaricators such as Richard Brenneke, Ari Ben-Menashe, and others. In fact, according to the testimony of Michael Scott, attorney for Heinrich Rupp, an October Surprise fantasist who claims to have flown William Casey to Paris and Madrid, it was Parry who had brought Brenneke to the attention of Rupp's lawyers. (Brenneke's testimony subsequently resulted in perjury charges.)

If Marks was only doing "some West Coast reporting," why is it that he called Robohm, who lives in Connecticut? It strains credulity that Robohm would fabricate the conversation with David Marks and then write letters to both Senator Terry Sanford and Representative Lee Hamilton to complain about his misrepresentation. Robohm has detailed notes of her conversation with Marks (who by the way, brokered a deal in 1989 between Gary Sick, Brenneke, and himself for a docudrama to be made of the October Surprise conspiracy).

Before the April 7 "Frontline" broadcast had aired, Robohm had been promised a contract on another "Frontline" documentary. But she was told by PBS that she would not be hired unless her dispute over the October Surprise "Frontline" documentary was "resolved" in "Frontline"'s favor. Robohm refused to stop her criticism, and she was told her job was canceled. •

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FROM WASHINGTON

Twilight zones

"Now, where did I put that urban policy? I know I've got one around here somewhere." George Bush isn't the only one in Washington desperately searching for something practical to suggest in response to the Los Angeles riots, and for proof that he's actually been worried about the teeming cities all along. Thus the sudden interest in "enterprise zones," a policy idea that's been simmering on the back burner for more than a decade.

Jack Kemp, now secretary of housing and urban development, has been pushing enterprise zones since he was a pup of a congressman. This is his moment. Kemp is rightly praised as the one member of the Bush administration who has shown he really cares about the tragedy of the underclass. But enterprise zones are a gimmick that has more to do with Republican theology about taxes and regulations than with practical help for the poor.

The idea is to designate twenty-five or fifty (or seventy-five or 100) districts across the country as "enterprise zones." These would be areas of especially high poverty and unemployment. Owners, investors, and employees of businesses that set up in enterprise zones would get a banquet of tax credits and deductions and regulatory exemptions. "A zero capital gains tax rate for those who live, work, and invest in inner cities cannot by itself erase poverty," writes Kemp with uncharacteristic reserve. But he thinks that, combined with other goodies, it might come close.

Theology aside, enterprise zones are not the free market at work. They are government overriding the free market to direct capital where it wouldn't otherwise go. They are, in short, industrial policy—a concept that is ordinarily anathema to Republicans. Nothing wrong with that. The question is whether the policy will work, and at what cost.

If you make the bribes rich enough, they undoubtedly will lead to the creation of additional businesses and jobs in the designated zones. But where will these businesses and jobs come from? There are three possibilities. Some will be genuinely new businesses that wouldn't exist at all without these incentives. Some will be businesses that move from or would otherwise set up in prosperous, crime-free areas that can spare a few jobs in a worthy cause. And some will be businesses enticed or deflected from areas almost as poor and grim, but not quite grim enough to qualify as an "enterprise zone."

Logic—the "marginal" logic so beloved of supply-side economists—suggests that the businesses most easily tempted into enterprise zones by any given package of incentives will be those from areas almost as bad. Businesses from prosperous areas will be second and truly new businesses will be third.

What will Jack Kemp say to a white working-class area that loses a factory to an "enterprise zone"? This begins to look a bit like wholesale reverse discrimination. (And we know what George Bush thinks about that!) What will Kemp say to a dry cleaner in competition with another dry cleaner a couple of blocks away who is exempt from all sorts of business taxes? What will he say to the ghetto resident who works for an already established company and therefore pays more income tax than his next-door neighbor who works for a new one?

Inevitably, once a program like this gets going, the list of beneficiaries will be expanded. Most enterprise zone legislation already guarantees that a certain number of zones will be in rural areas. The number of zones will increase, the rules defining a "new" business will be loosened, time limits on various benefits will be extended. That prospect doesn't bother the Republican theologians, who see lower taxes and looser regulations as good in all circumstances. But each expansion will simultaneously increase the cost of the program in lost revenue and lower its effectiveness by reducing the relative advantage of being in a "zone."

The image "zone" enthusiasts like to promote is of the ghetto resident, relieved of his burden of taxes, suddenly discovering the inner entrepreneur. But that is not how enterprise zones work even in theory. After all, is it likely that someone with the brains and gumption to overcome the poverty, the crime, the squalor, the broken families, the drugs, the lousy education, the racism and go on to found his own business is currently thinking, "Heck, I really can't be bothered, because if I succeed and sell my company someday I'll have to pay a 28 percent capital gains tax"?

The real point of most of the tax breaks is to entice outside investors to put their money into these troubled areas. Bribing rich people to help poor people, rather than helping poor people directly, is a popular approach in this country because the cost of the tax breaks doesn't show up on the government books. But the middleman will have to take his cut. And this approach enlarges the deficit just like a traditional spending program. Of course, if you wish to believe, in 1992, that this time the tax cut really will—honest injun—bring in more revenue than it loses, well, I guess I can't stop you.

Last month the Congressional Budget Office produced a study of the low-income housing tax credit, a similar effort to help the poor by bribing the rich that the Bush administration is currently trying to get extended. The CBO concludes that it's very bad value for the money: reducing unsubsidized housing by three units for every two units produced under subsidy; benefiting investors more than tenants; siphoning off vast sums to lawyers, accountants, and bankers. Enterprise zones would work the same way.

As for regulatory exemptions, no one can object to cutting red tape. But regulations are either sensible or they are not. If they are not sensible, they should be abolished everywhere, not just in some "zone." If they are sensible, why should residents of a "zone" be denied their benefit? There is actually a serious argument that protections for health, safety, and the environment are luxury goods that poor people should have less of. But I dare Jack Kemp to make it.

It's no surprise that some liberals support enterprise zones. Representative Charles Rangel of Harlem likes the idea for the same reason a congressman from Nebraska likes farm price supports: it's a goody for his district (and the best goody he can hope for from a Republican administration). Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, likes the idea because, like any complex and selective tax break, it would increase his patronage power. Neoliberal policy nerds are tempted by the idea's very gimmickry, its nouvelle cuisine quality, its enticing aroma of private-public partnership, and so on.

The way to create jobs is to create jobs. In his forthcoming book, *The End of Equality*, TNR's Mickey Kaus fleshes out the idea of a new WPA, providing useful work for all who need it. Enterprise zones, by contrast, are just another government boondoggle. And a boondoggle of a characteristically Republican kind.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 25, 1992

RACE AGAINST TIME

(continued from the cover)

We should start with a rejection of the crasser simplifications that have been aired over the past few weeks. The Rodney King verdict and the riots in South-Central Los Angeles do not necessarily reflect an utterly polarized country, or a society defined solely by differences of race. In many areas—most particularly in the workplace—American life is far more racially integrated than it was two generations ago. Our public culture is saturated with various racial and ethnic influences in which minority tastes are, if anything, dominant. Our major cities, once divided clearly into black and white, are increasingly a jumble of new ethnic groups in which the black-white divide is a fragment of a more complex immigrant drama. Black Americans constitute a smaller and smaller part of the racial mix in our major cities; and South-Central Los Angeles, as Harold Meyerson points out in this issue (see "Fractured City," page 23), is a case in point: African Americans now make up some 55 percent of the population, compared with 65 percent a decade ago; whites have increased their presence slightly; those identified in the Census as Hispanic have jumped threefold. This social transformation has created ineluctable tensions, misunderstandings, and breakdowns; but these breakdowns have been a function of greater, not lesser, access of one kind of American to another. We are witnessing as much the wages of social nearness as the wages of social distance. And alienation from those nearby is especially combustible.

Moreover, these complexities operate within races as well as among them. The emergence of a large and powerful black middle class, in some ways more horrified than its white counterpart by the pathologies of the inner city, has transformed the sociology of race. Thirty years ago James Brown performed on television to help defuse a race riot; in 1992 Hammer spent the weekend after the L.A. conflagration at the Kentucky Derby. For many blacks, the riots took place in another world. Similarly, what job you have and where you live are far more accurate predictors of racial attitudes among whites than they were thirty years ago. We do scant justice to the efforts and the experiences of millions of white Americans who have come a long way since the 1960s if we equate them all with the jury of Simi Valley.

The lessons of the Rodney King verdict, furthermore, are not reducible to the race of the jurors: fair and decent verdicts are to be expected even from "racially unbalanced" juries. The verdict was owed, rather, to a cultural and economic divide between the most secluded of suburbs and the inner city (see "Following Orders," page 17). Moving the trial out of its original neighborhood turned the central meaning of the American jury on its head. The original point of the constitutional guarantees of trial by jury in this country was not to protect a defendant's right to be judged by his peers (as in England), but to protect the right of local communities to be represented on popular bodies that could check overreaching by governmental officials. The Sixth Amendment requires a jury "of the district wherein the crime shall

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have been committed," because many Anti-Federalists wanted an explicit guarantee that juries would be organized around local rather than statewide communities, which they thought would be more alert to abuses by central authorities. The result in the King case confirms this original republican insight: if the community's voice is not represented in the jury box, it will be heard in the streets. We hope the federal civil rights case against the police officers in the Rodney King beating is pursued vigorously, and in the district where the incident occurred, an area with a large black and Latino population.

Many, of course, will seize on the King verdict as a sign that American society must become more race-conscious, not less: that we should have more racially contrived juries and judges, more racially determined electoral boundaries, more "multicultural" political and cultural and educational arrangements. Republicans have a history of cooperating on this front, happy to exploit whiter and whiter ghettos as their permanent political power base, and cynically accepting the permanence of racial prejudice and suspicion. Right now the Supreme Court is deciding a case that will determine whether criminal defendants can strike prospective jurors simply because of their race. In a related case, Justices Rehnquist and Scalia recently argued in a dissent that a defendant has a right to be judged by a jury of his own race but has no right to object to the exclusion of jurors of another race. (In other words, the government can't exclude black jurors from the trial of a black defendant, but it can automatically exclude white jurors.) Scalia and Rehnquist would recognize the "undeniable reality" that all racial groups tend to be sympathetic to members of their own race, and hostile to members of others. The separatist assumption of their logic—that justice is inseparable from race—is, of course, shared by many on the political left. Caught in the pincers of this strange political alliance, the cause of colorblind justice will have a hard time surviving.

We do not mean to argue, of course, that the American criminal justice system is not prone to racial bias, or that in general American society does not display lingering and intense signs of racism. We simply believe that the positive developments of the last thirty years suggest that, with time, these elements are superable; that the complex racial dynamics of our society are not easily summed up by blanket assertions of racism; that immigration is continuing to transform the racial—and social—balance of this country, often for the better; that the answer to the problem of racism, in any case, is not to compound it with more racist assumptions.

Moreover, the notion that a civil rights agenda is always the solution to a race-based problem is profoundly faulty. It wasn't even true in the 1960s, when race riots followed civil rights legislation rather than preceded it. Today the disjunction is even more acute. At the root of much of the disturbance in Los Angeles is not an inherently corrupt criminal justice system, but a phenomenon that underpins much of the discussion of race in this country: the black underclass. We say black underclass, because for all the elaborate statistical arguments that can be made, it is still a predominantly black phenomenon. In 1980 blacks constituted some 58 percent of those living in neighborhoods with extreme social problems, and over 60 percent of those on welfare for a long time. The levels of family breakdown are, moreover, far higher among blacks than whites. Even Andrew Hacker (see "The Myths of Racial Division," TNR, March 23) concedes that 56.2 percent of black families are headed by single women, compared with 17.3 percent of white families.

The black underclass perpetuates racial division in this country in several ways. It has helped weaken the American city, speeding up white flight to the suburbs and decreasing the level of black-white geographic contact. Where black-white mixing does occur, the powerful image of the black underclass—underscored by the events of the last week—has served to stigmatize the vast majority of middle-class blacks, and to powerfully perpetuate the racism of whites.

Any analysis of race in this country has to grapple directly with this problem. It did not emerge yesterday; nor is it, as some Democrats would have it, a simple creation of the Reagan-Bush era, although, heaven knows, neither Reagan nor Bush showed much interest in alleviating it. We do not believe that even the proposals we make here will fundamentally change life in South-Central Los Angeles within the next generation. But we are equally convinced that they cannot be postponed any longer.

We should begin by recognizing that even the underclass is not monolithic. Within its ranks there are both the truly disadvantaged and the truly deviant. We have seen plenty of both groups in the last week. The former are quite often—and most typically—the victims of the latter, and no attempt to break underclass culture can ignore the presence of this black-on-black violence. When black civil rights leaders said the lesson of the Rodney King case was that no black man was safe on the streets from white policemen, they revealed just how out of touch they are. The real person the black inner-city inhabitant has to fear is another black inhabitant. The vast majority of inner-city crime is black-on-black, and the scope of it is terrifying. In the District of Columbia, some 42 percent of black males between 18 and 35 are enmeshed in the criminal justice system.

Since the 1960s the progressive response to these thugs has been to develop new alternatives to incarceration (or, as probation and parole are now called by academic faddists, "intermediate sanctions"). Today more than 3 million convicted criminals are serving their sentences on the streets, not behind bars. We've tried this approach every which way (intensive supervision, community service, boot camps), and it simply doesn't work. The data on all such probation and

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parole programs are now in, and they're damning. Whatever you call it, "community-based corrections" spells higher crime and higher social costs than you get from incarcerating street criminals for all or most of their sentences.

The answer, however, is not to lock up the truly deviant and throw away the key. With 42 percent of the young black male population in the inner city involved in crime, the prisons simply aren't large enough. Rather, the answer is more aggressive community policing. Real community policing means lots of cops on the streets working with community leaders, talking to residents, and living in the neighborhoods they patrol. The federal government should provide the funds and training necessary to increase the manpower of all major big-city police departments by at least 20 percent. All of the additional cops should be deployed in the inner cities, and all should be trained, retained, and promoted according to the precepts of community policing. The cost of such a program, according to John DiIulio of Princeton, would be about $2 billion.

Second, the federal government should promote and pay for first-rate prison-based drug treatment programs. In prison or out, the key to successful drug treatment is staying with the program. All the data show that certain types of prison-based programs work very well, especially when there's an after-care, post-release component. The federal prison system is developing a full menu of drug treatment programs for federal prisoners. The feds should mandate, fund, and provide the technical assistance necessary to implement such programs in every state prison system in the country. Just as important is making drug treatment available for those members of the underclass who have managed to stay out of prison.

A far more powerful governmental weapon in the battle to break underclass culture, however, is already in the hands of the federal government. It's the welfare system. The coup de grace last week in L.A. was the sight of lines forming to receive welfare checks the Friday after the meltdown. This, for many, was the return to normal. We don't believe, as some conservatives do, and as Marlin Fitzwater continues to assert, that welfare created the underclass crisis in these communities. Nor do we believe that family breakdown was created by welfare or that fiddling with monetary incentives could put those families back together. We merely hold, as TNR senior editor Mickey Kaus argues in his forthcoming book, *The End of Equality* (New Republic Books), that at this point welfare is the critical sustaining element in the life of the underclass. If we are to break through this culture of idleness, poverty, illegitimacy, and crime, we have to cut off its lifeline.

This does not mean a perpetuation of Republican neglect. The panaceas of "empowerment"—homeownership, tenant-management schemes, and the like—however beneficial in themselves, fail to address the gravity of the situation. Even Jack Kemp, the only member of this administration who shows the slightest empathy for the inner-city poor, admits that it is hard to pull yourself up by your bootstraps when you don't have any boots. Enterprise zones are illusionary in the best of circumstances, and the inner city is not the best of circumstances (see TRB, page 6). Trickle-down economics has never trickled down this far. The culture of dependency is so great that even times of economic boom, such as the mid-1980s, have left the structures of unemployment and despair largely intact.

Our alternative proposal—and Kaus's—is a radical one: to return to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's commitment to "preserve not only the bodies of the unemployed from destitution but also their self-respect, their self-reliance and courage and determination." We propose replacing all financial payments to the able-bodied poor (including Aid to Families with Dependent Children, "general relief," Food Stamps, and housing subsidies) with a simple offer of a government-provided job. This radical shift from the welfare model is the only proposal with a hope of changing the way the underclass thinks and acts; shifting the paradigm of people's lives; relating actions—such as childbearing—to their immediate costs. It has the benefit of not merely encouraging responsibility, but of making it the only option available.

Such a proposal would cost a great deal of money and be an administrative headache. Kaus's best estimate of the cost is somewhere between $40 billion and $60 billion. That's a sum beyond the imagination of today's Washington establishment, but one that could be raised by a simple hike in the gas tax to levels Europeans would dream about, or a claw-back of middle-class entitlements, or a combination of both. In a sane government, given the events of the last week and the developments of the last two decades, it would be approved with dispatch.

It's no panacea, of course, and it requires greater elaboration than we have space for here. The point of the proposal, however, is extremely simple: that only the experience of work can integrate the underclass poor back into our society; that only government can accomplish this task; that, without this effort, we are not only committing more generations to misery and violence, we are poisoning the rest of our society as well.

Our conviction that something this drastic must be attempted is motivated by a belief that what is at stake in the events in Los Angeles is the entire notion of a common American citizenship that can transcend race and class and connect one civic obligation to another civic need. The liberal welfare state, for all its good intentions, has done much to undermine this notion of citizenship. The liberal obsession with purely racial paradigms has weakened it still further. Conservative cynicism has compounded its demise. If the flames of Los Angeles do not spur us to recover it, nothing will. •

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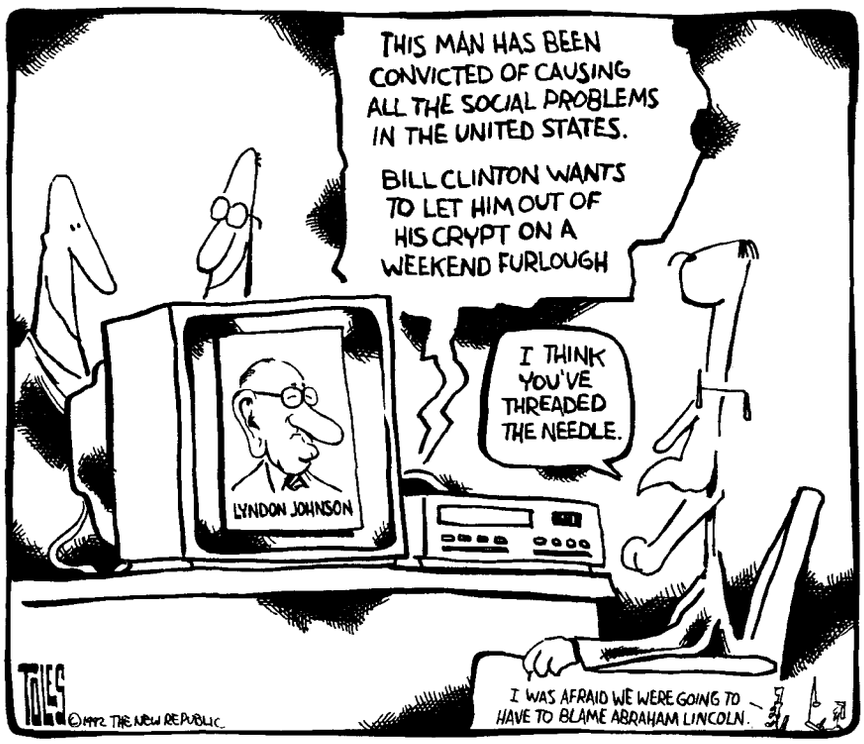
NOTEBOOK

BUSHISM OF THE WEEK: "As you know, I planned a trip out there for some time, so it fits in very nicely." —May 4, on plans to visit L.A. in the wake of the riots

BERLIN CALLING: When German reunification first occurred, it was greeted with understandable Europhoria. Americans hailed it as the emergence of a new superpower, seeing it as further proof of U.S. decline. The Bush administration, with its customary obtuseness, ignored the danger signs; and Helmut Kohl played down the cost. Only a few called it right (see "Uber the Hill" by Niall Ferguson, TNR, February 4, 1991). The cost is now unmissable. As most of Germany is crippled by public sector strikes because featherbedded workers balk at the cost of reunification, the rest of Europe suffers from high interest rates because of massive German borrowing. Suddenly German inflation is dragging other countries' inflation upward; and the economic stress of Central Europe is dragging Germany down. The first lesson of this reality check is that a continued American military presence is still necessary in the region; the second is that our foreign policy should operate according to the reality of others' problems rather than fantasies about our own decline.


THIS MAN HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF CAUSING ALL THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES.
BILL CLINTON WANTS TO LET HIM OUT OF HIS CRYPT ON A WEEKEND FURLOUGH
LYNDON JOHNSON
I THINK YOU'VE THREADED THE NEEDLE.
I WAS AFRAID WE WERE GOING TO HAVE TO BLAME ABRAHAM LINCOLN.
TOLES
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BEYOND READING: 288—Special Topics—American Literature Unbound (Duke University). Jane Tompkins.

> The reading in this course will be kept to a minimum so that the texts we read can be absorbed naturally and acquire resonance in your life. I want to do Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Other texts can be added by the class (but not too many), including criticism, if people want it. (I would hope to read some poetry together.) The aim of the course is to re-integrate dream, emotion, magic, bodily sensation, and action with the experience of literature (getting outside the classroom on two or three occasions to do things, as a class, that the texts suggest), and to reflect on the course itself as a teaching/learning experience, so that it may become a resource for the future in teaching these and other texts. Students will be encouraged to evolve as many avenues into the texts as possible; the range of responses can include just about anything, from camping out on the seashore after reading *Moby-Dick* to visiting a slave museum while reading *Beloved* to writing an essay for publication in a learned journal.

L'ETAT C'EST MOI: According to the *Sunday Times* of London, Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, threatened by the popularity of Foreign Minister Robert Ouko, approved a brutal beating of Ouko by Energy Minister Nicholas Biwott, to teach the 58-year-old a lesson. But Biwott got carried away, beating, burning, then shooting Ouko—in front of Moi, in February 1990. When Ouko's body was found—dumped from a helicopter in an empty field—the government at first claimed he had committed suicide, then put up a pair of bodyguards as scapegoats. Last November, under international pressure, Moi fired Biwott, who had become a "prime suspect" in the Ouko killing. Now former Kenya Special Branch inspector George Wajackoyah claims Moi was present when Ouko was murdered (and that it happened in one of Moi's homes). Not coincidentally, the killing took place shortly after Ouko had returned from a state visit and warm reception in Washington, where the Bush administration viewed him as a potential moderate replacement for Moi. We hope another one emerges quickly.

EYES ON THE PRIZE: We're pleased to announce that our roving former correspondent, Michael Kelly, as well as winning the National Magazine Award for reporting, has also won the Overseas Press Club of America's Ed Cunningham Memorial Award for magazine reporting from abroad.

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Clinton and the riot.

FIREBELL

By Sidney Blumenthal

In an instant, the crisis of race in L.A. burned through the trivialization of the presidential campaign. The violence made a statement longer than a sound bite, pre-empting more than regular programming. Among other things, the imposition of bloody reality is the true beginning of the general election campaign, the first real engagement between Bill Clinton and George Bush—a contest about national character. The campaign, now lit by flames, may be veering away from Bush's complacent game plan. "Four more years"—the slogan of stasis—has a decidedly ironic ring after L.A.

Before L.A., Clinton had confided to a friend his frustration with the "character" issue. He felt as if he were facing a wall that he could not break through, that his voice could not be heard. In Pennsylvania he had tried to give himself a fresh start by delivering policy speeches. His foreign policy address in New York, which had been crucial in lifting him above the din, was the model. So he laid out his details on the economy and the environment, balancing criticism of Bush's approach with his own positive one. He had ruled out the Checkers speech approach to the "character" issue after much internal discussion in his campaign. "If you do it, it had better be good," one prominent Democratic consultant advised him, "because it will be your swan song."

But all of these calculations were rendered moot by the verdict in Simi Valley. Clinton's first response to the swiftly moving currents was to "wonder whether this is a just verdict." Within hours the protest turned into a conflagration. Clinton's next response was to condemn the criminality and call for law and order. With these two quickly drawn stances, similar to Bush's, he established the tension he would have to balance—a tension that has unbalanced the Democratic Party since Watts went up in flames in 1965.

Since the beginning of the campaign, however, Clinton has consistently spoken on the problem of race. In Michigan he made a point of delivering the same speech about the need for personal responsibility and combating racism to both black and white audiences. In New York he broke his schedule to attend a museum exhibit on the history of relations between blacks and Jews, where he remarked on the need for conciliation—an appeal quickly drowned out in the New York pandemonium. Neither of Clinton's initial statements on L.A. managed to break through the news. His diminished stature, and his role as the challenger, were reflected in the scant press attention paid him early during the crisis. Moreover, his messages seemed indecisive.

The next day his first sustained engagement with the White House was joined. Day by day, the two sides would probe each other, all the while angling for superior political ground. Bush had no real idea what his position should be, or what responses he ought to offer. And he too had the difficulty of balancing his responses so that he could appear compassionate without offending the Simi Valleys. Marlin Fitzwater, in the meantime, was trotted out to try to discredit whatever Clinton might do. "I notice that Slippery Bill chose to treat this as a political opportunity," he remarked. This was a classic case of projection. Clinton somewhat weakly returned Fitzwater's slur: "It looks to me like Mr. Fitzwater is trying to play politics with it." But Clinton also took a half-step back, fearful in fact of being seen as too political. His defensiveness precisely put him in danger of being perceived as overly political.

The following day, however, he delivered a long, powerful speech in Birmingham, Alabama, attempting to harmonize law and order and social justice, toughness and compassion. It had always been central to his appeal that there was no contradiction between what had been depicted as far political poles for decades. In his argument, he drew on the memory of watching Washington erupt after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination: "I can remember still to this day driving my car with a big red cross on it down into the inner city to the churches, where the people who were burned out of their homes were huddled in church basements waiting for food."

Clinton's position on race, as it happens, is a good part of his life story. When his widowed mother went to nursing school in New Orleans, she left her one-year-old son in the care of her parents, self-taught rural folk, who tended a general store that extended credit to poor black and white alike—not the usual practice. Eldridge and Edith Cassidy were also self-conscious racial liberals, an attitude they naturally bred in their grandson. Bill played with black children while growing up but attended a segregated school. Yet according to his mother, even before the crisis in Little Rock over school integration in 1957, the young Clinton, not even in his teens, had voiced feelings at home that segregation was wrong. "It was Bill who really educated me on this," she told me.

At Georgetown he was known not only as a class politician, but as a civil rights enthusiast. More than once he recited King's "I Have A Dream" speech for his friends. When King was shot, he watched Washington burn from the roof of his dorm. His next-door neighbor from Hot Springs, Carolyn Staley, had planned to visit him in advance, and she didn't change her itinerary. Clinton took her in the car with the red cross he described in his speech. "Back at the house,"

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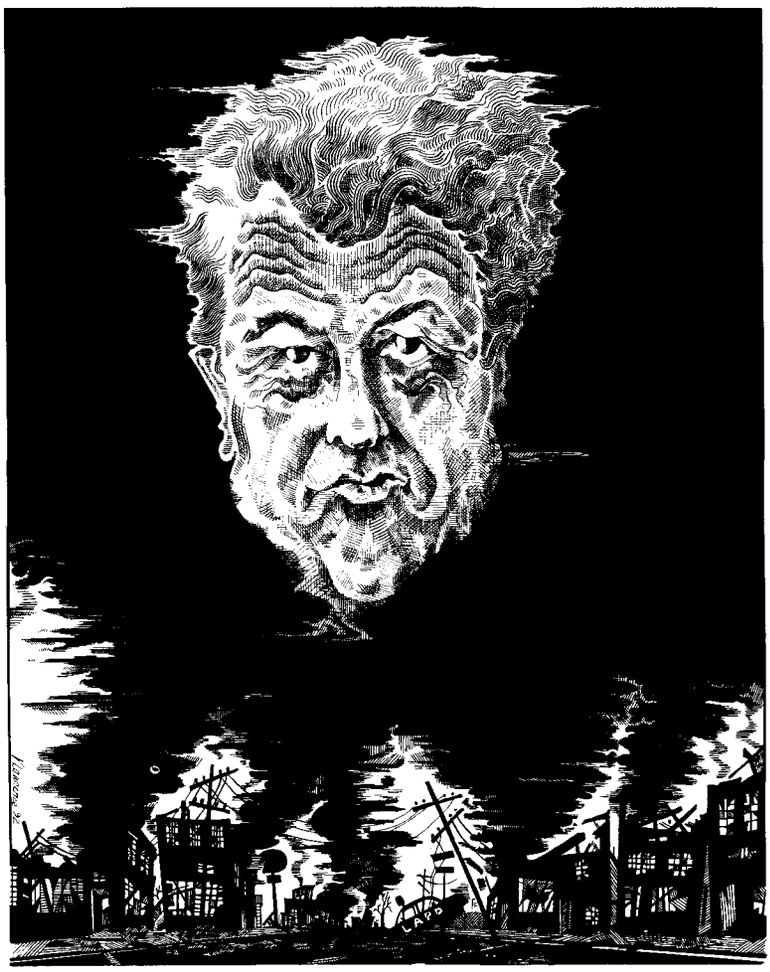
she told me, "he recited snippets of King's speech. It was quiet, not for anyone else to hear. It was almost under his breath. He was stunned."

Less than two months later a distraught Tom Caplan woke up his roommate, Clinton, in the middle of the night to tell him Robert Kennedy had just been shot. Clinton, according to Caplan, was more than shaken. "I'll never forget Bobby Kennedy going to Mississippi," Clinton told me, "and walking in the South Bronx, going to L.A. and being with the white, ethnic factory workers in Indiana. I really believe he did feel for them. I believe that politics is part mind, but part of it has just got to be gut." Reforging the black-white coalition that briefly cohered in support of RFK's candidacy has remained an evanescent Democratic dream—shattered in part by the Vietnam War. Clinton wrote in his now famous letter to Colonel Eugene Holmes on his draft status: "I worked for two years in a very minor position on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I did it for the experience and the salary but also for the opportunity, however small, of working every day against a war I opposed and despised with a depth of feeling I had reserved solely for racism in America before Vietnam."



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The cultural pull of black life on Clinton has also been formative. His earliest ambition, in fact, was to be not a politician, but a musician. He practiced his tenor sax every day, sometimes for hours, and loved rhythm-and-blues and rock 'n' roll. (He confessed to a friend that he cried when Elvis died.) Making the Arkansas All-State Band was among his proudest achievements. Clinton also was a devotee of gospel music. He is very privately religious—an enlightened Southern Baptist. (His minister, the late W. O. Vaught, served as a counselor during troubled personal times.) Even as a boy, his neighbor Staley, a preacher's daughter, recalls, he went to church, often alone, absorbed in the music. On Sundays Clinton sings in his integrated church choir. He likes to attend different black churches and sing the hymns with the congregations. Part of his racial sense comes from his close ties to the black churches, where he feels at home. Through his many friendships and links here and elsewhere with blacks, he has gained an instinctive feel for the black middle and working classes—the black majority. Much of the press, it is safe to say, has been too obsessive about Clinton's "character" to discover these aspects of Clinton's character.

It was possible for Clinton to become governor of Arkansas only because the old Bourbon politics had been greatly set back by the civil rights revolution. He appointed more blacks to more government posts than all the previous governors combined, including many to his immediate staff. He tried to direct economic development toward the Delta, where many poor blacks live. And he privately organized a biracial coalition in the small town of England, Arkansas, where there was an incident of racial violence among high schoolers that the KKK tried to exploit.

As governor, however, not all of Clinton's efforts were successful. A civil rights bill to ban discrimination in employment that he sponsored in 1990 was defeated by the conservative legislature. All along, Clinton's policies in Arkansas have been framed with the possibility of failure in mind. He is keenly aware of walking a thin political line. (The initial hostility to him as "slick" reflects the tenuousness of the Southern progressive and was deeply political in origin. Clinton's defensive impulses are also, in great part, rooted in his political struggles in Arkansas.) So after Clinton's comeback from defeat in 1982, mostly for trying to do too much too fast, he was eager to find a way to justify new programs for education, child care, and public health.

Clinton now adopted the rhetoric of "accountability" and "responsibility." But it was hardly a sheer political ploy. He was absorbing the new scholarship on race and, in particular, the plight of the black underclass.

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The writings of University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson had a large impact on Clinton's thinking. Wilson argued that legal discrimination was no longer the chief problem facing blacks, especially the underclass. Rather, the decline of manufacturing in the central cities and the growth of an underclass culture, accompanied by the fraying of the bonds of family and church, had created a new American dilemma. The old orthodoxies were inadequate in the light of the appalling new developments. Clinton's old civil rights passion, informed by the new realism, poured into his speeches on L.A.

In his Birmingham speech—and in his speech to the Democratic Leadership Council two days later in New Orleans—Clinton made his complete case. These two speeches may be the most extraordinary he has given in the campaign, and they have been very spottily reported. In them, he explained that economics is a root of poverty, but that this was an insufficient explanation of what had gone wrong. Blacks, he went on, have made "a great deal of progress," electing many mayors. "But what has happened beneath that? Beneath that there are those who are not part of our community, whose values have been shredded by the hard knife of experience, where there is the disintegration of family and neighborhood and jobs." The question of material welfare, he argued, is important, but not paramount. "Are you better off than you were four years ago? Well, if that's the test, George Bush cannot be re-elected. But that is not enough of a test. Because if all we ask is whether you or you or you are better off, what about 'us'?"

Clinton said he understood the "fears" of whites who "have been scared for so long that they have fled to the suburbs of America to places like Simi Valley...." But the crisis meant that "there is no place to hide." He praised Bush for "a very fine statement on the security measures he had taken, on the action he had urged the Justice Department to undertake," but added that this did not address "the fundamental problems" of the underclass. And the Democrats "have also let the American people down," by "too often" reflexively dismissing "victims of crime," clinging to social programs that don't really work, and showing a quickness to "say that those who seek to reform the welfare system are the enemies of the poor." Above all, the solution to this crisis was politics: "The thing that is killing our country today is that millions of Americans ... do not believe anything will change. They do not believe politics can make a difference." Thus, the problems can be met only by a revived community that ultimately must express itself through politics. In the year of anti-politics, this conclusion was truly radical.

Within Clinton's campaign, as he delivered these speeches, a debate took place about whether he should go to L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley and Representative Maxine Waters, whose district was the site of the riot, initially asked that Clinton not come. But when the smoke cleared an opening, Clinton flew in, surveying the devastation with Waters as his guide, touring Koreatown, where merchants were trashed, and listening to community leaders. In Washington the nervous White House, still uncertain what Bush would say on his trip to L.A. three days hence, sent out the redoubtable Fitzwater to blame the crisis on the Great Society. But this gambit had the perverse effect of putting the burden of proof on Bush. If true, where was his, well, vision? The old law-and-order strategy that had worked so well for the Republicans since the rise of Richard Nixon seemed obviously manipulative and hackneyed.

The White House's negative tactic gave Clinton the opportunity and audience for his volley back the next day. "It's just amazing," he said. "Republicans have had the White House for twenty of the last twenty-four years, and they have to go all the way back to the '60s to find somebody to blame.... I want to do something about the problems.... They are not serious about any of these domestic issues." The lack of responsibility that Clinton has traced as a source of the underclass crisis now encompasses the White House.

Bush's handlers, of course, will make constant adjustments. But whatever his tactics, they have already been revealed as such. The larger question for him is whether legerdemain and palliatives will measure up to the leadership demanded by "a firebell in the night"—Jefferson's description of the crisis of slavery, now quoted frequently by Clinton. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

STUNNED

By Fred Barnes

George Bush's instincts in the early hours of a crisis are nothing to brag about. But his second-wave reaction is invariably tougher and politically shrewder. This habit of stumbling, then recovering, recurred as Bush responded to the Rodney King verdict and the rioting in Los Angeles. On Friday, May 1, Bush huddled at 7 a.m. with Marlin Fitzwater, the White House press secretary, and sketched out a written statement. It was more a reaction to the failure to convict four police officers accused of beating King than to anarchy in Los Angeles. "Yesterday's verdict in the Los Angeles police case has left us all with a deep sense of personal frustration and anguish," the statement began. Its hand-wringing tone almost made the rioting sound justified. And it recalled his wishy-washy first response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and to the coup attempt by Soviet hard-liners in 1991.

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Five hours later the president marched to the White House press room to deliver a different response. In the intervening hours Bush had gotten more information, listened to advice, and figured out a better spin. He watched scenes of rioting on TV and was thunderstruck. He consulted Attorney General William Barr and Louis Sullivan, the secretary of health and human services and the Cabinet's only black. He learned that his initial statement had bombed at the White House senior staff meeting. Among others, personnel chief Constance Horner said she found it weak and disappointing. The new statement had a sharper edge, condemning "the wanton destruction of property and the senseless death of several citizens." Bush insisted that the first principle "of law and of behavior" that should be followed in Los Angeles was "a respect for our legal system and a demand for law and order."

This put Bush on firmer (and familiar Republican) ground. He did what he had to do to buttress his words and keep political control of the unfolding story. He summoned black leaders to the White House. He dispatched federal agents and soldiers to Los Angeles. He gave a nationally televised speech that blended intolerance of rioters and support for racial reconciliation in appropriate doses. He sent Fitzwater to offer an alternative to the claim, made by Bill Clinton and others, that Reagan-Bush policies of urban neglect had prompted the riot. No, said Fitzwater, the welfare policies of the 1960s and 1970s were the underlying cause. There was only one problem. Bush hadn't fought for a program of his own to supersede those counterproductive programs. Bush had only paid lip service to most of Housing Secretary Jack Kemp's conservative war on poverty. When Congress gutted the Kemp program last year, Bush acquiesced. "If Bush and his administration had taken all Kemp's initiatives and really run hard on them for the last two years, we'd hold the high ground politically in this argument," says Republican Representative Vin Weber of Minnesota.

The idea of inviting black leaders to the White House came from Sullivan. He put together a list that included Benjamin Hooks, Joseph Lowery, and John Jacob. The theory was simple: better to have them complain to Bush in person than attack him from the outside. Then the thought occurred that they might trash Bush upon encountering reporters in the driveway outside the West Wing after the meeting. So a few conservative blacks were added to the list, but they didn't make a beeline for the nest of reporters and microphones. Keith Butler, a black minister and Republican city councilman from Detroit, later explained to a Bush aide that White House reporters didn't know him and thus hadn't waved him to the mikes. Hooks and Lowery didn't wait to be called.

Even before the session with blacks, Bush had decided to give a speech to the nation. At 7:15 a.m. on May 2, he talked with Barr and General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in the Oval Office. They decided to commit Army troops and Marines to riot control duty. "Once the president made that decision, then we recommended he should have a speech to the nation," says Fitzwater. By "we," he meant himself and Sam Skinner, the White House chief of staff. Bush agreed, and the writing job was assigned to David Demarest, the communications director. Demarest isn't regarded as an ally by conservatives, but he wrote a strong law-and-order speech. It ignited a struggle at the White House.

Tony Snow, who was Bush's chief speechwriter until recently and now heads the office of media relations, also wrote an address for Bush. Though he hadn't been asked, Snow spent the evening of May 1 drafting a speech he'd wanted Bush to give for a year. Snow is a pal of conservatives—he came to the White House from *The Washington Times*—but his draft was devoted to racial amity and civil rights, not law and order. Snow has strong feelings on the subject. He grew up in an integrated neighborhood in Cincinnati. His mother is a nurse in an all-black community and his father once taught in a black high school. Snow had lobbied vainly for months for Bush to give a major civil rights address in which he would confront two issues that repel blacks, Willie Horton and Bush's opposition to racial quotas. Snow thinks Bush should talk frequently before black groups about basic issues like jobs and safe neighborhoods, not Republican themes like "school choice" and "empowerment."

Snow presented his text to the "communications group," the press aides from the White House and the Bush re-election campaign who convene every afternoon in Fitzwater's office. After Demarest left, Fitzwater began reading Snow's speech to the group. "It had passion and, more important, compassion," says an aide. "It was inspirational. It talked in very, very moving terms. It didn't have all the law and order." Fitzwater says it was "syrupy on racial harmony," but he loved it anyway. So did Torie Clark, the campaign spokeswoman. Fitzwater took the Snow speech to Bush, who also liked it.

The Snow speech had enemies. Budget director Richard Darman and William Kristol, Vice President Quayle's chief of staff, had been called to Skinner's office to tinker with Demarest's text. They stayed all afternoon to protect its hard-line language. Kristol talked to his old boss, ex-drug czar William Bennett, and penciled in a reference to "personal responsibility" at Bennett's urging. Darman added a paragraph about how TV pictures of the King beating and of forty-eight hours of rioting had "distorted our better selves and turned us ugly. We cannot let that happen. We cannot do that to ourselves." Kristol and Darman expunged language about rampant racism and retained stern passages that had come straight from Bush. The president had told Demarest that he wanted to say he's ready to use "whatever force is necessary" to quell rioting. That passage stayed. More important, the law-and-order stuff set the tone at the beginning of the speech. And in the end, this was the speech Bush gave: it emphasized his actions in sending troops, tacitly making the point that he was in charge.

But not totally. The burning of L.A. forced Bush to pay attention to Kemp, the only member of his administration with a full-blown urban policy. Kemp sent Bush a

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copy of a speech to black mayors outlining the policy. And in case that didn't get through, Kemp wrote an op-ed piece ("A New Agenda for Ending Poverty") in *The Washington Post* on May 3. Bush invited Kemp to two Oval Office meetings. And he took Kemp along when he left to tour Los Angeles on May 6. It was too little, too late. Last year, after Congress decimated Kemp's program in the housing bill, Kemp publicly pleaded with Bush to veto the bill. The president refused. Bush's instinct was to forgo a fight. He was for Kemp's urban agenda, just not very much. Now his timidity has come back to haunt him. •

Where's RFK when you need him?

THE BOBBY GAP

By Ronald Steel

There are times when silence is cowardly, not golden. This is one of them. George Bush and Bill Clinton pirouette around one another, trying desperately to avoid antagonizing any important voting group. "Stunned" at the acquittal of the four police officers who beat Rodney King, Bush first described the riots as "the brutality of the mob, pure and simple." Clinton urged people to "pull together to turn this country around" and blamed "twelve years of denial and neglect." One hedged signal for the small towns and the pale-skinned suburbs, another for liberals and those ghetto-dwellers who bother voting.

The gulf between the two Americas has never seemed greater. What is so striking about the current crisis is that there is no public figure who can speak compellingly to either side, let alone to both. The effect of four successive presidents running against government in general and Washington in particular has been to discredit not only politicians, but the elemental belief that the vehicle for addressing political problems lies in politics. We have surrendered the only effective instrument for change that we have, replacing it with the power of money on one side and the power of anarchic rebellion on the other.

In today's America, one group has the means to live in comfort, seek health care, and obtain the education that provides the key to well-paid careers. The other is locked into insecurity, poverty, fear of illness, and dead-end jobs. This division is usually described as one of race, because it is to the advantage of those who control the levers of power to do so. Their task is made easier by the poisonous heritage of slavery and the cultural differences and suspicions it has engendered.

But the increasingly profound division is one of class. This election year has shown the deep alienation of the white working class—not against blacks, but against a system in which it had such trust and against which it now feels powerless. This alienation has taken the form of a suspicion of all conventional politicians: indignation over the sliding morality evidenced by the House banking overdrafts, efforts to limit terms of office-holders, enthusiasm for a man on horseback who offers no qualifications other than that he is not a politician.

The causes of alienation lie deeper: in the destruction of labor union protection of workers; the export of jobs and investment to the Third World; the declining real income of most Americans; the fear of unemployment, the loss of health insurance, and a free-fall into dependency; the multimillion-dollar payoffs to incompetent corporate executives; the federal government's refusal to provide health care or job training because it must spend $300 billion this year to protect us from the impoverished Russians.

This is not the first time we have had a social crisis in America, and it won't be the last—although not since the Great Depression of the 1930s has there been such alienation on the part of the white majority. Nor is it the first time we have had violence and looting in our great cities. The predominantly black district of Watts in Los Angeles exploded in 1965, followed by outbreaks in other cities, and culminated in the spasm of 1968 when riots shook seventy-six American cities following the assassination of Martin Luther King.

In that time of grave social unrest the nation's political institutions were reeling from the twin assaults of the Vietnam War and the civil rights protests. Then, too, conventional politicians were discredited. Like today, the public yearned for someone who could rise above the fear and hatred, and who had the credibility to capture the attention of both sides. Unlike today, in 1968 one such person, Robert Kennedy, spoke out forcefully and was listened to by both sides.

Campaigning for the Democratic nomination for president, he was in Indianapolis when he learned of King's murder. The crowd in the black section of the city that had gone to see him had not yet heard the news. Speaking extemporaneously, he told the angry crowd that the country could move toward "great polarization—black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King Jr. did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love." "It is not the end of violence," he continued. "It is not the end of lawlessness; it is not the end of disorder. But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land."

The following day in Cleveland, Kennedy spoke to a group of businessmen about the "mindless menace of

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violence in America." "What has violence ever accomplished?" he asked. "No wrongs have ever been righted by riots and civil disorders. A sniper is only a coward, not a hero, and an uncontrolled, uncontrollable mob is only the voice of madness, not the voice of the people. Whenever any American's life is taken by another American unnecessarily, whether it is done in the name of the law or in defense of the law ... whenever we tear at the fabric of life which another man has painfully and clumsily woven for himself and his children, the whole nation is degraded."

These words were meant to reassure those who rightly feared the breakdown of public order. But Kennedy did not stop there:

> For there is another kind of violence, slower but just as deadly, destructive as the shot or the bomb in the night.... This is the violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor, that poisons relations between men because their skin has different colors. This is the slow destruction of a child by hunger, and schools without books and homes without heat in the winter. When you teach a man to hate and fear his brother, when you teach that he is a lesser man because of his color or his beliefs or the policies he pursues, when you teach that those who differ from you threaten your freedom or your job or your family, then you also learn to confront others not as fellow citizens but as enemies—to be met not with cooperation but with conquest, to be subjugated and mastered.

Less than two months later Robert Kennedy was himself assassinated. He was the last major politician in this country who could reassure whites of his determination to preserve the rule of law while at the same time convincing blacks of his moral commitment to social justice. He was the last candidate for president who could assemble the difficult but essential coalition of blacks, working-class whites, and liberals for social change. Blue-collar whites trusted him because they knew he would knock heads to ensure respect for the law. He had been a fierce campaign manager for his brother John, a tenacious attorney general who had hounded Jimmy Hoffa and other labor bosses, and a politician with a jugular instinct. He had a deserved reputation for ruthlessness, and none questioned his toughness.

Despite his testy relations with Martin Luther King Jr. and the tepid attitude of John F. Kennedy's administration toward civil rights, blacks increasingly saw Robert Kennedy as a white politician who at least understood their anger. He preached a message of compassion and understanding, which they found ultimately credible. How he would have tried to reconcile the races and address the inequities of class had he been elected is something we will never know. He might well have failed. But he could at least talk to Americans across racial and class lines.

Today, as the fissures in American society widen further and Washington has come to seem a trough in which lobbyists and lawmakers gobble their swill, no one has risen to remind both black and white Americans of their common destiny and their common responsibilities. No one has spoken persuasively or with credibility and conviction in the name of the larger society and of the noble founding ideals to which most Americans remain dedicated. Behind the babble of this election campaign there is a terrible silence, punctuated only by cries of fear, rage, and cynical despair. •

Why the jury voted to acquit.

FOLLOWING ORDERS

By Barry Scheck

For those who saw only the videotape of Rodney King receiving sixty-one baton blows in eighty-one seconds, the jury's failure to convict is astonishing. The explanations offered by the jurors bordered on the bizarre: King controlled the action. If he had complied with orders, the beating would have stopped. The officers had no choice but to act the way they did. With the possible exception of Officer Laurence Powell, race was not a motivating factor for the police. They were just following rules. Indeed, the jurors said they themselves were just obeying the judge's instructions and applying them to the facts. They had no choice either.

The public has reached some simple conclusions about this verdict. One is that it was determined by race. There is nothing so terrible, the jurors seemed to think, and certainly nothing criminal, about police roughing up a black man, especially a black man with a criminal record who appeared to be a drug user, after a dangerous, high-speed chase. Another conclusion is that only an all-white jury, drawn from a more homogeneous community than Los Angeles, could have reached this result. It was foolish, unnecessary, and even unfair for the courts to change the venue of the trial to Ventura County.

These conclusions are, in fact, substantially correct. If it were not for King's race, at least some of the officers would almost certainly have been convicted for using excessive force. If the trial had been held in Los Angeles, there surely would have been convictions. The decision to change venue to Ventura County was a legal and political mistake. But matters are still a bit more complicated.

The post-trial statements of the jurors reveal that they unequivocally bought the defense view of the case. Principally through the testimony of Sergeant Charles Dukes, an unflappable "use of force expert" who teaches at the LAPD Academy, and defendant Sergeant Stacey Koon, the commanding officer at the scene, the defense set forth a theory that was internally consistent, explained much of the videotape (the last fifteen seconds where King is beaten lying on the ground were difficult to address directly), and portrayed the police as good soldiers.

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The LAPD has highly structured rules on the use of force, based on a "command and confront" model. An officer is allowed to inflict physical pain to obtain compliance with commands when confronting a suspect. Striking a suspect about the body (but not the head) with batons is actually taught at the police academy. The specific technique taught, and employed by the defendants, is the "power stroke."

Since the videotape shows that King never complied with police commands—arguably he lunged toward the officers at the beginning of the tape, kept getting up, continued to raise his hands, and resisted when the officers tried to pin him down or "swarm" him—they had the right, under LAPD rules, to persist in hitting King about the body. The tape does not show a blow to King's head or face. Prosecution witnesses said a head blow occurred before the tape started. Defense witnesses said King suffered injuries to his face from hitting the ground, not from a baton.

The "command and confront" logic of the defense theory was perfectly gauged for the jury that tried the case. Nine of twelve jurors had either served or were closely associated with some branch of the military. Five middle-aged men were in the Navy; one graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and served twenty-two years. One woman juror, 64, was with the Army at the end of World War II and now works for Industries, Inc., supervising government contracts for outfitting Navy ships. Another woman, 65, was with the Air Force. Another, a 40-year-old Hispanic, served in the Army. The ninth juror with military ties is a 38-year-old man who works at Unisys, where he designed military software.

As the trial unfolded, the commentators on Court TV recognized that the defense was doing a surprisingly good job in defusing the tape and framing issues from the police perspective. As the defense concluded with the testimony of defendants Theodore Briseno and Powell, however, some seemingly fatal cracks opened in its tightly crafted case. Briseno offered compelling testimony that he thought the baton blows of his fellow officers were sickeningly excessive, that Koon had lost control, and that he (Briseno) had communicated these beliefs to his partner, Officer Rolando Solano, at the scene. Solano, a defense witness, corroborated Briseno's anguish. Powell himself was battered in cross examination by numerous inconsistencies—the prosecutor, Terry White, in his closing argument created a chart showing more than twenty demonstrable "lies" told by Powell. But most important, during Powell's testimony (due to a tactical blunder by his lawyer) the jury learned of a nasty racist description he offered of a domestic dispute he had encountered earlier in the evening ("Gorillas in the Mist," "Who be they?" "Ha, ha, ha"). For the first time in the trial, White, a black prosecutor who had to that point downplayed the racial angle, hammered it home.

But the jury did not respond. Powell's racist remarks only underscored the unstated racial premise in the defense's "command and confront" theory. As Koon, expert witness Dukes, and the defense lawyers broke down the tape frame by frame, and talked about the extraordinary, continuing danger posed by an uncompliant King, the racial imagery was plain. King was an unusually large man. He did not seem to respond to the electronic shock of the teaser gun, or an electronic harpoon shot. He acted like he was on PCP. He was dangerous. Somehow, the racial barrier prevented this jury from seeing a human being under the baton blows.

The result surely would have been different if there were blacks on the jury, or the jurors were less homogeneous in terms of their background. And there is no doubt that a more heterogeneous jury would have been selected if the trial had been kept in L.A. In California the jury pool is drawn from all those people in a county who are either registered to vote or have a driver's license. Los Angeles County has 8.8 million people, 60 percent of whom are Hispanic, black, or Asian; Ventura County has a population of 669,000, 33 percent of whom are minority. The jury pool for this case was all of Ventura County, not Simi Valley alone, as is widely believed, but it was still vastly different from the pool in L.A. County.

Why change the venue? Courts in California and elsewhere have been reluctant to change venues from big cities no matter how much prejudicial pretrial publicity has occurred. In particular, courts are reluctant to move a case from a heterogeneous jury pool to a homogeneous jury pool. There are strong reasons for supporting this reluctance (see "Race Against Time," page 7). First, justice is served when the broadest cross section of a community sits on a jury. Second, in highly publicized cases, jurors in a neighboring area are just as likely to have formed opinions. In such cases, whether venue is changed or not, courts must rely upon the jury selection process to screen out biased jurors.

The California appellate court that ordered the change of venue in the King case was not persuaded that the saturation publicity required a change of venue. What proved decisive was the political turmoil instigated by the case—the dispute between the mayor and the chief of police, the impaneling of a blue ribbon commission to make recommendations about reforming the police department, and the extraordinary spectacle of the original trial judge being removed from the case because of improper ex parte communications with the prosecutor and the appellate court. The court observed that the nature of the publicity differed from that in other notorious criminal cases, such as Charles Manson: "Manson was not entangled in local politics," it declared, "did not focus on local politicians, and did not involve issues unique to Los Angeles County." It is hard to dismiss this aspect of the appellate court's decision as unreasonable. Indeed, in a passage both tragic and ironic, it noted that riots had been predicted if venue were changed and the officers acquitted. But as the court pointed out, it would be impermissible to abridge defendants' right to a fair trial on the basis of predictions of violence.

The venue problem in the King case does not lie in the appellate court's decision that some change was necessary; rather, the mistake was made by the trial judge in deciding to move the case to Ventura County rather than

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Alameda County (Oakland), apparently the only county under consideration that closely resembled Los Angeles demographically. The prosecutor's decision not to oppose Ventura County was also at fault.

Maybe the trial court felt the inconvenience to the parties and witnesses outweighed the advantages of moving to a more distant but more heterogeneous venue. Maybe the prosecutor overestimated the power of the videotape and underestimated the difficulties involved in convicting police officers generally. Whatever they were thinking, it was a mistake.

BARRY SCHECK, a professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, was a commentator for Court TV during the Rodney King case.

White men can't loot.

TOTALLY STOKED

By Ari Posner

Wednesday, April 29. This is going to sound very L.A. When I first hear the verdict in the Rodney King beating trial, I am riding the Stairmaster at my local gym and reading the last chapter of Julia Phillips's *You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again.* Here in the semi-affluent, all-white Fairfax district, adjacent to Beverly Hills, the acquittal doesn't stop life cold. Someone flips on a radio. Daryl Gates refuses to criticize the all-white jury. "I don't want to prejudge the criminal justice system," he says. Still, nobody expects things to spiral out of control—after all, control is what Gates's LAPD is famous for. I have plans to see Lou Reed at the Greek Theater high in the Hollywood Hills. I go.

So do a lot of people. On the way I hear about the melee in South-Central: black youths are attacking white drivers, pulling them from their cars and beating them in the street. Horrifying, but it's happening "down there." Still, I'm beginning to feel guilty. Lou Reed comments mildly that the verdict is unjust and we cheer. He vows to "take our minds off it with some beautiful music." It seems possible at the time.

Three hours later, South-Central has ignited. I hurry home to watch the city burn. The revolution is televised on all seven local stations. Standing in front of a blazing Thrifty's market in a poor black neighborhood, a man screams at the camera: "This is like Watts! We shouldn't be burning down our *own* neighborhood!" He's right, but as I drift into sleep I can't help dwelling on the implication: Would it be better to burn another neighborhood instead?

Thursday, April 30. Mayor Tom Bradley comes on TV to announce a city-wide dusk-to-dawn curfew and warns residents to stay inside. I obey until half an hour later three squad cars race to my corner and ten policemen clad in riot gear storm a neighbor's back yard, looking for a burglar. They're under orders to travel in groups, they tell me. They seem relaxed. Meanwhile, in South-Central, looting is spreading while outnumbered police look on helplessly. What's wrong with this picture?

Several friends come over, and we try to joke away our fear. By now it's clear that the violence will not be restricted to the area south of the 10 freeway. Buildings are looted at La Brea and Pico, only three miles away; drive-by gunfire is ubiquitous.

It's a crisis, so we snap into action. My roommate Bob mixes daiquiris. I monopolize the remote control. Paul searches through the Thomas guide, L.A.'s indispensable book of street maps, trying to establish a geographic pattern from the fire reports. Josh tries to call the local fire department to volunteer our help, but he can't get a dial tone.

We head out for provisions. The local supermarket is mobbed by upscale shoppers hoarding for the days ahead. We go instead to a small Jewish deli nearby that is less busy and buy salmon at $9 a pound. It will be the best dinner any of us have eaten at home in months.

On TV a reporter at a gun shop in Hollywood says it's the busiest day of the year. A man rams his van repeatedly into the window of a pawn shop. At an auto parts store a chunky Hispanic looter trips on his way out, dropping his armload of batteries and shock absorbers, and another looter helps him up—pulling together to help those less fortunate. A reporter asks a father why he is there with his son. The man smiles. "We saw on television that everything was free."

The fires move north. Parts of Koreatown are torched. At 6:20 I open the front door and see a tower of black smoke billowing into the sky nearby. It has yet to make the TV news. Should we check it out? All over town the overstressed fire department has been relying on local residents for help; but they are also being shot at. We argue furiously, then decide to go.

Samy's Camera, a landmark photo development store, is blazing two blocks away. There is no sign of looting. Hasidic Jews have blocked off the intersection. A lone fire truck battles the inferno inside, but it's hopeless. Bob and Paul take up positions on the line holding up the fire hose. Josh reminds me that cyanide is a key ingredient in photo development and I run around panicking people by warning them not to inhale the poisonous smoke (which, come to think of it, is starting to look sort of yellow). A telephone pole goes up in flames and a neighbor tries to put it out with a garden hose before a fireman stops him: not a good idea, spraying live wires. The pole is extinguished by itself.

As night falls we take a quick driving tour of the battlefield. La Brea has been thoroughly looted from Olympic to Hollywood. "Kill a Crip or Die," it says in

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gang-scrawl on the computer store around the corner from my apartment. Empty Apple computer boxes lie strewn in the street. We pass an Orthodox Jew loading a Torah into his trunk. A car filled with young black men races by and the driver raises his arm in the black power salute.

Friday, May 1. We stay in most of the day, watching the atrocious local TV coverage. I learn that black smoke indicates a fresh fire, while white smoke means it has been partially quenched with water. By 6 p.m., when President Bush goes on the air with his revised Persian Gulf speech promising law and order, things have calmed down significantly. His strident bid to reassure seems completely out of step with the reality on the ground. Surprise.

Saturday, May 2. The cleanup begins. Paul and I join two friends and head to Koreatown to help out. All four corners at some intersections appear bombed out. National Guardsmen patrol the roofs and buzz around in Humvees.

A peaceful rally is under way in Ardmore Park in the heart of Koreatown. Families have gathered to call for peace and justice. There is only a smattering of "Where were the police?" signs. People wave Korean and American flags. A man holds up a poster that asks: "Where was Ted Koppel?" Apparently the Koreans are angry that "Nightline" characterized them as a collection of crazy vigilantes. One man holds a "Justice for Rodney King" sign. We pass by a banner that reads, touchingly, "We Hae Unfair!" A chant begins: "What do we want?... Justice! When do we want it?... Justice." They have the right idea.

The rally turns into a march through the decimated streets. The crowd, estimated by police at 60,000, is said to be the largest protest by Asians in American history. We are four of about only a dozen non-Koreans marching. As we walk we pass blacks and Latinos who flash peace signs. I am moved for the Koreans. By the end of the day I can hum their national anthem.

Sunday, May 3. Things have calmed slightly, but the curfew is still in effect. There are rumors of violence to come. The worst is that the Crips and the Bloods, the two biggest black gangs, plan an attack on the National Guard. A reporter on Channel 9 passes this on with a pleased smirk.

During the afternoon I go with several friends to South-Central for the cleanup. Only four days ago I would never travel this far in, but thanks to the influx it's safe today. We're sent to a warehouse where The Boys, a local supermarket chain that was heavily looted at several locations, has organized a giant giveaway. We bag non-perishable groceries as celebrities hold a press conference nearby. Diane Ladd, Casey Kasem, and Carl Weathers (the guy who played Apollo Creed in the *Rocky* movies) praise each other for helping out.

At home I turn on the TV for updates. It's become an addiction. The death toll hovers around fifty, mostly black men, mostly shot during robberies. Commentators never tire of pointing out how 1992 has differed from the Watts uprising: the hoodlums are more mobile, better armed this time. Wait thirty years, I think. We'll be looking back on the 1992 riots and saying, "Remember the good old days, before the gangs started flying their own helicopter gunships and firing SCUD missiles?"

ARI POSNER is a former TNR reporter-researcher.

The view from the police.

THE BLUES

By Jeffrey Goodell

"What you gonna do—you gonna kick my ass, you gonna beat me over the head and kick me like an animal, like you did to Rodney King?" screamed a black man, woozy with booze. "That what you gonna do to me, officer?"

It was almost midnight on Hollywood Boulevard on the second night of the L.A. riots, and Officer T. was trying to get this guy to comply with the curfew. Officer T. is a young white cop, three years on the LAPD, the picture of an eager, professional law enforcement officer. His shoes were shined, his uniform neatly pressed. He was wearing a black net over his white riot helmet so as not to be an easy target for sniper fire.

For almost an hour he had been recounting his tales of the first night of the riot, when he was sitting at his home in Baldwin Hills, a working-class neighborhood, watching the verdict on TV, watching a gang of black kids pull Reginald Denny out of his truck and beat him almost to death. He admitted to feeling torn about the King verdict—"As a human being I feel one way, as a cop I feel another."

The drunk taunted him. "Curfew? What curfew? Why don't you beat me over the head, tell me about that *curfew?*" Just then a couple of kids rode by on bicycles, heaving a bottle. It smashed on the sidewalk a few feet in front of Officer S., startling him. The drunk laughed, staggering off into the shadows. Officer T. stood there for a moment, stunned. "So what do you think?" he asked me, point blank. "Are we all corrupt and fucked up?"

Such blunt reflection is rare among cops, especially in a rigorous, paramilitary-style police department like the LAPD. Ignoring the nationwide trend toward community-based policing—a law enforcement strategy that gets cops out of patrol cars and back walking the beat—the

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LAPD remains a vestige of the 1960s, when cops were mostly big white guys with guns and police departments fashioned themselves as little more than a civilian Marine Corps. Though the LAPD made some strides during the 1980s toward integration, it's still a male-dominated department, one with an abiding faith in muscle and spit-shined shoes.

But in the wake of the Rodney King beating, the mighty LAPD slid into a round of collective self-examination, at once ashamed, guilty, and proud. When the verdict finally came in and the city exploded, all these subterranean rumblings broke through, and suddenly Los Angeles was full of police officers who were openly questioning themselves, explaining themselves, venting long-buried frustrations. For a couple of nights, the "blue curtain" of silence had a tear in it.

At Pico and La Cienega, just a few blocks away from the border of Beverly Hills, a large art deco building was on fire, flames shooting fifty feet into the sky. While the fire trucks pulled up and unraveled their hoses, Officer M. cleared the area and set up a roadblock in the middle of the street. He's a seven-year veteran of the department, a big, boisterous black guy with a thick neck—he was a fullback in high school. Though he too admitted to mixed feelings about the verdict, there was a subtle sense of satisfaction in the rioting that was going on around him, a kind of vindication: "It just goes to show that we aren't the bad guys," he said.

Once the fire died down, I asked him how he felt about criticism that the department didn't move fast enough to quell the riots in the early stages. Several city officials had suggested that Police Chief Daryl Gates—who attended a posh fund-raiser in Brentwood while the riot was breaking out—deliberately delayed deploying police officers to the riot area so that he could later rush in and save the city with his mighty police force, thereby bolstering a possible law-and-order campaign for mayor.

"That's a fantasy," Officer M. said. Like most officers, he feels a kind of blind loyalty toward Gates, seeing him as a cop's cop, above cynical political manipulations. "Nobody knew it was going to blow up into anything like this. Anyway, it's easy for people to sit in their living rooms and talk about what we should or shouldn't have done. Nobody knows what it's like being out here on the street. In fact, I'm kinda glad about this whole thing [the riot]. Maybe it will give people a feeling for what would happen to this city if there weren't any cops around, if we just let it go. Maybe then people would start to appreciate us a little more."

An hour later in South-Central Los Angeles, just off Crenshaw Boulevard, about a mile from where the rioting began, a rattling old LAPD bus clanked by, about half full of people on their way to jail. As it stopped to pick up another passenger to be booked, Officer S. saw a woman he recognized on the bus. "Hey honey, what happened, you getting your little ass hauled off to jail again?" She mumbled something in return, and then the bus coughed smoke and accelerated away. Officer S. eyed my notebook. "Some Joe Puke Liberal would see that and might think I'm treating her indecently, violating her civil rights. But they don't understand that I see that girl every day on the street—she gives me shit, I give her shit. We have a *relationship*."

Officer S. is from Queens, spent four years with the New York Police Department before coming to L.A., and is now the ultimate booster of the LAPD. Most of his outrage at the rioting was focused on what he calls "the fucking politicians." He was particularly annoyed at Mayor Tom Bradley and several City Council members who rushed to condemn the verdict in the early hours. "The fucking politicians are incapable of saying anything but 'guilty, guilty, guilty.' But were they in the jury box? No. They weren't in the trial, they have no idea what really happened ... they just pass judgment on us without having seen the whole thing."

He railed against the politicians for playing politics with the police department, accurately pointing out that just a week before the riots began, Bradley made the front page with his announcement that he wanted to cut the 8,100-member police force by 7 percent (about 600 officers). Then he pulled his radio out of its holster and went on a tear about what a piece of junk it is, how it rarely works properly, how his life is in danger because the "fucking politicians" can't come up with enough money to provide them with decent equipment. Bradley, he crowed, "just has a hard-on for the department because when he was a cop he was never promoted past lieutenant."

The next morning Officer N. was parked in a minimall at Eighth and Western Avenue, on the outskirts of Koreatown, one of the hardest hit areas of the city. Every store in the mall had been burned to the ground, except for The Boys supermarket, which was looted the night before but somehow saved from total destruction. There was debris everywhere, spilling out the front doors—shattered glass, rotting bananas, dolls' heads, broken bits of videocassettes. Nearby a small group of mostly Hispanic women hovered in the shadows, leaping out to grab some small item—a soggy box of Pampers, a bag of potato chips—whenever Officer N. turned her back.

"Please don't do that," Officer N. said wearily, shooing the looters away like flies. She's been on the force for seven years, a handsome blond woman who grew up in L.A., went to college for a couple of years, and then joined the police department with "the naive idea that I might be able to do some good in the city." After three years on the beat, she was promoted to a desk job and now reviews reports for Gates on officer-involved shootings. (Due to the overload on the department during the riots, she was temporarily reassigned to the streets.) Like many female cops, she's married to a cop. Her husband teaches use of force at the Police Academy.

After a good deal of prodding, she reluctantly talked about her reaction to the Rodney King beating. "My husband and I have had some serious arguments about this—he's a little more forgiving of what happened than

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I am—but we both agree on one thing: people have every right to expect perfection out of the police department. But they also have to understand that you're never going to take the human aspect out of it, you're never going to get away from the fact that the people in these uniforms are human beings, that they feel the same kinds of pressures and frustrations and anger that anybody else does." Another looter tried to sneak into the store—Officer N. had to charge toward her, warning her to keep away. When she returned, she seemed even more dispirited. She pointed to a scrawl of graffiti on the wall nearby—it read, "LAPD=KKK" and "LAPD Killa." And then below that: "You can't beat the beast out of us—the fight has only just begun."

I asked her about the prospects for change within the department. "It's coming," she said, "but it's going to take years." Charter F, the police reform measure on the ballot in June that will, among other things, limit the term of the police chief, is only a crude beginning. The heir apparent to Gates's throne, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Willie Williams, is likely to find it slow going, walking into the job in the aftermath of the riot, a newcomer in a tightly knit brotherhood that views outsiders with skepticism. "One wrong move and he'll alienate the entire force."

"There is one good thing I can see coming out of all this," she added later, her eyes red with fatigue. "Now, when a police officer takes his or her gun out, or have their batons in the air, I think most of them are likely to pause an extra half-second and think about exactly what they're doing. Maybe an image of the burning city will flash in their minds."

As for herself, she admitted that she's thinking about quitting the LAPD.

JEFFREY GOODELL, a Los Angeles journalist, writes frequently about crime and police.

How the riots will change L.A.

FRACTURED CITY

by Harold Meyerson

At 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29—the first evening of the Los Angeles riots—Deputy Mayor Mark Fabiani and Tom Bradley aide Phil Depoian huddled in deliberation in an anteroom of the First AME Church in South-Central, addressing the problem of how the hell to get their boss safely out of the building.

Outside, a crowd of perhaps 1,000 had gathered that on any other night would have viewed Bradley with anything from affection to indifference. Professionals in suits, matrons holding their grandchildren, young men (few in gang regalia) from across the city, mainstream and fringe activists, almost entirely black, they had come to AME for what had been billed as a meeting to formulate a political response to the acquittals that had been handed down earlier that day in Simi Valley. With the church filled before their arrival, they listened to their own ad hoc collection of speakers and debated strategies. Just a few blocks away, looting had begun. "Don't do it in our community!" one speaker implored. Across the parking lot, people took up chants suggesting alternative targets. "Beverly Hills!" shouted one cluster. "Parker Center!" (the LAPD headquarters) yelled another. Some of the suits in the parking lot crowd tried again to enter the church.

From the reports Fabiani was receiving, it was clear that much of the city was in flames. Bradley had already canceled his appearance on "Nightline"; he had to return to City Hall. After about ten minutes in the anteroom, Fabiani, Depoian & Co. concluded that there wasn't going to be a lull in the parking lot action. With that, Bradley bent down and quick-stepped, in a Groucho Marx-like crouch, toward his limo. He made it, the car lurching out of the lot as demonstrators banged on the roof and the hood.

At that moment Police Chief Daryl Gates was on his way back to Parker Center from an anti-police-reform fund-raiser in Mandeville Canyon that had effectively taken him out of commission for the first two-and-a-half hours of the riot. For the next two days, according to City Hall sources, Gates was uncharacteristically "subdued and deferential" during strategy meetings, uncertain about how he would deploy the National Guard and, as late as Friday night, attempting to dissuade General Marv Covault, whom the White House had designated to command the federal forces, from deploying his troops in L.A. In the end, Gates wasn't seeking to defend the city, just the reputation of the LAPD.

Bradley, at least, had no such inhibitions about calling for outside assistance. By the time he pulled away from AME, his communications with Matt Hunt, division commander of South-Central, had convinced him that the LAPD would not be able to put down the riot. He promptly called on Governor Pete Wilson to deploy the Guard. But in other matters, visitors to the mayor's office during the days of the riots have described him as "stunned and paralyzed" as he contemplated the wreckage of the multicultural civic order he had sought to create.

In the aftermath of the largest civic disorder in American history, Los Angeles is leaderless. The 1965 Watts riots may have signaled the eclipse of an old order, WASP and conservative, personified by then-Mayor Sam Yorty and Police Chief William Parker. But by the mid-'60s a new governing coalition was already emerging, linking the black and Jewish communities, liberal on social issues, friendly to corporate priorities, and soon to be presided over by Tom Bradley.

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The '92 riot, by contrast, has left only casualties. It has ended Gates's tenure as leader of California's law 'n' order right, recasting him more in the mold of the *Pirates of Penzance* police sergeant whose men, Tarantara, never advance. It has dramatized the self-subverting essence of Gatesism: the creation of a police force so committed to the military repression of the inner city that merely to deploy it is to risk inciting total conflagration. It has revealed the limits of Bradley's regime, forever expanding to include the elites of one new group after another, but powerless to arrest the growth of poverty and a savagely alienated underclass.

Even worse, unlike 1965, there's no new order on deck. Bradley's appointment of Peter Ueberroth to head up the rebuilding of South-Central is less a strategy than a golden-oldies reverie: a hope that the magic man of the '84 Olympics can induce the very corporations that abandoned L.A. over the past two decades to reindustrialize it. And minority Los Angeles emerges from the riots terribly balkanized: blacks and Koreans seething at one another, Chicanos disdaining the Salvadorans who took part in the looting.

Among the rioters themselves, the battle cries and the demographics were totally mismatched. For unlike Watts in '65, this was a riot of a multiracial underclass—but with a rhetoric more relentlessly separatist than anything we heard in the '60s.

To begin with, South-Central L.A. isn't even preponderantly black anymore: in the 1970 census it was 74 percent black; in the 1990 census it was 48 percent black—and 45 percent Latino. South-Central today is more ethnically integrated and economically isolated than it was at the time of Watts, and the riot reflected that change.

At its outset, of course, the riot was driven by racial rage: the Simi Valley verdict was an unmistakable message to black America that old-style Mississippi justice still held sway in the laid-back postmodern suburbs of L.A. At AME's pulpit and in its parking lot on Wednesday night, the only speakers to rouse the audience appealed both to justice and to nationalist sentiment. "We are the oldest people on earth," said AME Rev. Cecil Murray, seeking to cool off the crowd, "we are not at Daryl Gates's level." "Black revolution!" the parking lot thundered.

But the "revolution" had two distinct parts—only one of which was "black." The interracial violence that began the riot and so terrified the city certainly came from young black men; so did much of the violence and arson that followed. The looting, by contrast, was an integrated, often familial, activity (as was the defense against looting), and some of the violence and arson came from Latino and white youth. I'm writing before any surveys have been taken on participants in the looting; but my guess is that these studies will turn up a cross section of what local labor economist Goetz Wolff has termed L.A.'s Third World economy—the long-term unemployed, to be sure, but also people who work below minimum wage in off-the-books factories, in curbside day labor, in L.A.'s nouvelle sweatshop economy. More than Watts in '65, this was an equal opportunity riot.

Just about the quietest corner of the county, by contrast, was the Latino (and Asian) East Side—a somewhat more prosperous sector than those areas of South-Central where new Latino immigrants and the black poor live side by side. What's more, East L.A. is filled with Latino-owned businesses; South L.A. is not filled with black-owned ones. Within Latino Los Angeles, riot participation was a function of class and neighborhood.

The riot of '92 was at once more targeted and more nihilistic than its predecessor. Unlike '65, of course, it reached beyond South-Central—in particular, racing up Western and Vermont Avenues to burn the stores of Koreatown. At the same time, it burned buildings within South-Central that would have been spared in '65: two public libraries, the Aquarian bookstore (the oldest black-owned bookstore in the United States), the district offices of South-Central's most effective and militant elected officials (Representative Maxine Waters and Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas), the headquarters of the Watts Labor-Community Action Council, one of the few Watts-based organizations that rebuilt that community after the riots of '65.

More than '65, the riot was a war of each against all. The destruction of stores and apartments within the largely Salvadoran Pico-Union neighborhood was particularly devastating: if there's one group in L.A.'s social order several rungs beneath the Crips and the Bloods, it's the Salvadoran immigrant community, most of whose members work in the informal sector of the economy and live in the city's most overcrowded tenements. Even on the wacko nether-reaches of what remains of the American left, this will be a hard riot to romanticize.

What's more, the Hobbesian character of the riot seems to have carried over into the post-riot analysis. The Chicano organization NEWS From America blames Central American immigrants for joining the riot; certain black leaders, jealous of the economic success of the Asian community and the coming political success of the Latinos (by sheer weight of numbers), lash out at both; many Koreans conceal a raging anti-black animus behind a wafer-thin veneer of peace rhetoric.

Neither multiracial rioting nor multiracial riot defense seems to have loosened the stranglehold that separatism exerts within L.A.'s communities of color. But then, with many L.A. unions weakened to the point of virtual non-existence, particularly within the non-white work force (roughly 1 percent of the county's 120,000 garment workers, for instance, are unionized), the city's only insurgent institutions, its only insurgent ideologies, are nationalist—if not tribal. And the tribe whom the riots may have affected most is L.A. whites.

On Thursday afternoon I picked up my daughter at her school near Olympic and La Cienega at 3:15. With the riot in full swing, I decided to take her to her mother's house in Brentwood—on any other day, a thirty-minute ride at most. On Riot Thursday,

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it was a two-hour, thirty-minute ride.

Twenty years of white flight from the central city were being fast-forwarded into one afternoon. Westbound Olympic Boulevard was gridlocked. So were Wilshire and Sunset. Stillbound in traffic, drivers got out of their cars and exchanged rumors. The Bloods and the Crips had joined together to attack the West Side. (Meanwhile in the San Fernando Valley, according to Assemblyman Richard Katz, the rumor was spreading that black and Latino gangs had made a pact to burn—the location varied—Sylmar, San Fernando, or Pacoima.) The Beverly Center had been trashed. Gangs were moving up this block and that street.

There was reason enough for fear. The riot had begun, after all, with the televised and seemingly interminable near-murder of truck driver Reginald Denny, a white man in the wrong place at a very wrong time. Late Wednesday night the newscasts began to cover the burning of a store near Beverly and Fairfax, in the heart of the Jewish West Side. Above all, by Thursday afternoon, it was plain that the riot was spreading, that the police were unable to contain it, and that the Guard was still nowhere to be seen.

The white city girded for violence. In Palms and Mar Vista, barricades went up around gas stations. Later that evening, in one Hollywood Hills canyon near the center of Hollywood, residents enrolled themselves in an ad hoc militia after spying gang members cruising through the canyon's lower stretches. (The police later said the gang-bangers were looking to set a backfire to distract the cops from commercial Hollywood, where looting opportunities were plentiful.) As one resident recounts it, a canyon filled primarily with "film industry and theater people" managed to come up with an amazing array of guns. An uneasy coalition of '60s liberals and survivalists then blocked off the mouth of the canyon with cars, and stood guard there all night (and the following two nights as well), brandishing rifles and bats on the several occasions when cars carrying young black men drove by. For the '60s lefties, it was a profoundly disorienting ordeal. "I always assumed that if I was going to be on the barricades," one resident told me, "I'd be on the other side."

In the rest of white L.A., the gangs never came—that is, not to residential areas. Some long anticipated nightmares didn't take place. There seem, for instance, to have been no anti-Semitic incidents in the course of the riot. While an AM-PM minimart in the mid-Wilshire district burned to the ground, the venerable Wilshire Boulevard Temple on the very next block didn't sustain even a graffiti mark. For Korean L.A., by contrast, the nightmare was sickeningly real. What Jewish shopkeepers had been to the riot of '65—the target of choice—Korean shopkeepers were in '92.

The first indicators of the riot's effect on L.A.'s whites should be clear in several weeks. On June 2 the city votes on ballot measure F—the Christopher Commission reforms that set a fixed term for the chief of police and bring the department under greater civilian control. Gates and the Police Protective League oppose the measure with the predictable argument that it will "politicize" the department. The conventional wisdom is that the riots have gravely damaged its prospects, that sentiment to rein in the cops has sharply diminished.

Surprisingly, though, a number of political consultants from both parties and some leaders of presumably conservative groups like San Fernando Valley homeowner associations contest that judgment. "People across the spectrum are distressed by the verdict, by the riots, and by Gates," says Parke Skelton, a Democratic consultant. "Prop F is a nice, safe reform." The opposition to F has also been badly hurt by Gates's damaged credibility within L.A.'s right. "He was going to a *fundraiser*, for Chrissakes," says GOP consultant Allan Hoffenblum, whose slate mailing will endorse the proposition.

The statewide June 2 primaries may not offer so clear a test. The only major candidates who may seek to exploit a white backlash are Pat Buchanan and GOP Senate hopeful Bruce Herschensohn. In 1966, of course, Ronald Reagan made it to the statehouse in large part due to the reaction to Watts—a harbinger of the national conservative ascendency that began two years later and persists to this day. The Bush administration is already trying to lay blame for the riots of '92 at the doorstep of '60s liberalism.

It may not be so easy a sell this time around. Discussions around town in the riot's aftermath have uncovered a predictable backlash—but also a surprisingly widespread acknowledgment that the downward spiral of the inner city is linked to the same Reagan-Bush policies of national neglect that in less drastic ways have injured the white middle class. And in Bill Clinton, the Democrats have their first candidate in years who seems poised to make common cause between South-Central and working- and middle-class whites. With his emphasis on "personal responsibility" and his stress on universal (rather than race-specific) economic programs, Clinton articulates the only politics with a chance of prevailing against Republican racial demagoguery.

It's a politics that badly needs to prevail if Los Angeles is to have any shot at reconstructing itself. Deputy Mayor Fabiani says that the Ueberroth Commission will produce nothing less than "a Marshall Plan for L.A." But a Marshall Plan in one city, in an age when corporations regularly zip across state and national borders in search of cheaper labor, is no more credible than socialism in one country. Banks and corporations will doubtless make some investments in Los Angeles that they might otherwise have shunned, but the notion that they will create the kind of high-skill, high-wage jobs required to rebuild the inner city—absent a federal industrial, incomes, and education policy—is fantasy. The fires of '92 can only be quenched by the elections of '92—and an electorate determined to create a more cohesive nation.

HAROLD MEYERSON is executive editor of the *L.A. Weekly* (where another version of this article will appear) and a member of the *Dissent* editorial board.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Regarding Fellini

Peter Bondanella, an esteemed scholar of Italian film, has committed an act of daring. It's the best kind of daring—unself-conscious and authentic. He has written a critical study that subscribes to no theory, and he has done it not to reprove the doctrinaires whose books throng the shelves but simply because he views films in a (currently unfashionable) humanistic art-historical light. His prose may sometimes be more fervent than fine, but his vision is clear.

Bondanella's new book is *The Cinema of Federico Fellini* (Princeton University Press, 367 pp., $49.50, $17.95 paper). It's the fruit of long devotion to Fellini, so devout that it begins with a reflexive Fellinian touch, a foreword by its subject. Bondanella, professor of Italian and of film studies at Indiana University, has previously published the invaluable *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, and in effect his new book traces that same history through the cinema of one artist.

His book surprises twice along the way. The opening promises a critical biography done with close knowledge of Fellini and his Italy. (A quick quibble here. Bondanella says that "between 1942 and 1943, [Fellini] apparently worked at the office of the Alleanza Cinematografica Italiana." That word "apparently" or its equivalent occurs several times thereafter. Knowing Fellini as he does, why couldn't Bondanella have resolved these matters?) But when Fellini's film career begins, Bondanella abandons biography in any substantive sense to concentrate on the films, dealing with them associatively, by theme and style, rather than in strict chronology.

The second surprise, soon manifest, is that the book is—or nearly is—what used to be called "value-free"; Bondanella is concerned with aesthetic analysis, not with aesthetic ranking. For instance, in a chapter aptly called "Dream and Metacinema," Bondanella treats, along with others, *8½* and *Ginger and Fred* as of virtually equal interest. Fellini himself perceives that this value-free method, enriched with knowledge and perception, is Bondanella's greatest strength. Fellini says in his foreword: "The most exciting aspect of Bondanella's work is, in fact, his inextinguishable faith in the power of reason and systemization, which reminds us in a nostalgic way of methods and choices inspired by respect and harmony."

Thematically, one can say chromatically, Bondanella explores the elements that grew and flowered in Fellini, that empowered him to make at least some films that will most likely stand the test of time, which of course means the test of changing times. For instance, Bondanella shows us how Fellini's early experience as a cartoonist gave him a sense that human beauty and human ridiculousness are not mutually exclusive.

Bondanella emphasizes—as, he knows, others have done—the unusual qualities of Fellini's neorealism, but he does it with added insight. Fellini rose to prominence as a screenwriter in the neorealist days right after World War II. His first important work was collaboration on the screenplays of Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* and *Paisan*. Pure neorealism. But when Fellini began to direct (*Variety Lights*, 1950), the neorealism was touched with a lyric quality, something other than the revelation of fact.

Still, all the work he did through *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957) was concerned with the underprivileged, if not the downright poor. With *La Dolce Vita* (1959), Fellini turned from hardscrabbling lives to the lives in upper strata that occupy most of the succeeding films. (Bondanella might have made more of this change of social venue.) Cyril Connolly said somewhere that one dividend of success for a writer is that it enables him to move into different, enlarged social circles, which may benefit his work. So it seems to have been with Fellini. When, consciously or not, he needed new circles to explore, his success with films about poor people gave him access to those circles.

This small irony coincides pretty much with a major event in Fellini's life: his discovery of Jung. (This conjunction, too, Bondanella might have stressed further.) Some years later, Fellini wrote of this discovery:

> It was like the sight of unknown landscapes, like the discovery of a new way of looking at life; a chance of making use of its experiences in a braver and bigger way, of recovering all kinds of energies, all kinds of things, buried under the rubble of fears, lack of awareness, neglected wounds. What I admire most ardently in Jung is the fact that he found a meeting place between science and magic, between reason and fantasy.

(He even went to visit Jung's home in Zurich in 1965.)

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Casablanca. *On its fiftieth birthday—the reason it is reissued—it holds up pretty well, Bogart (and the dialogue written for him) especially. (Reviewed 5/4/92)* **Howards End.** *Vanessa Redgrave, Emma Thompson, and Anthony Hopkins are only three of the reasons for seeing this beautiful version of Forster's great novel. (3/23/92)* **JFK.** *Essential viewing. More a historical fantasy than history, its very effect has a certain buried truth. (1/27/92)* **Raspad.** *A Kiev director's re-creation of the Chernobyl disaster. Most of the fictional stories woven around it are thin, but the core is chillingly powerful. (5/18/92)* **—SK**

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Only Jung could determine, possibly, whether Jung helped Fellini to focus on new landscapes for his films or whether the new landscapes opened him to Jung. In any case the conjunction impelled Fellini to concentrate still more intensely on making the invisible visible; to expand his cinematic style from the lyrical neorealist to the dreamily florid; and to do these things with characters who had, one might say, more leisure for inner turmoil. Fellini's horizon of humane sympathy did not shrink, but he discovered that Hamlet has to be a prince in order to have time for soliloquies.

This reader, grateful though he is for all that he learned from Bondanella, must note a critic's reservations. All Fellini films are, as Bondanella shows, truly and deeply Fellini's work, but this is a long way from saying that all are equally rewarding experiences for viewers. Knowing that such discriminations were not Bondanella's aim, I still must add that, for one viewer, Fellini's career since *8½* (1963) has been plagued with the problems first raised in that film—the artist's difficulties of replenishment in our century, of transmuting the present into a usable past. For this viewer, the best Fellini films since *8½* are *The Clowns* and *Amarcord*, and both of these are concerned with the long-gone past.

Fellini's desperation for material can be instanced by *Toby Dammit* and *Satyricon*, adaptations from literature though he had often said he hated such adaptations. Bondanella explains that Fellini had just suffered a severe illness, that "both Poe and Petronius ... served Fellini as restorative therapy, 'curing' his weakened imaginative powers." But did they? Those films, like the subsequent *Casanova*, didn't do much more for me than display again Fellini's ability to select and guide superb designers and cinematographers. *Roma* and *City of Women* seemed a genius's currycombing of previously combed sources to make sure that he hadn't overlooked anything usable. *And the Ship Sailed On* sparked some hope, which *Ginger and Fred* and *Interview* soon dimmed.

Sadly relevant though these comments are, I think, they do not lessen the anatomizing value of Bondanella's book. Courageous in ideational independence, he is equally steadfast in his enterprise—to understand and explicate an important artist's process. He does this to an impressive degree, not with clinical smugness but with relish and respect. His book is a loving and helpful tribute. •

A defense of ancient (and tarnished) Greece.

The Oldest Dead White European Males

BY BERNARD KNOX

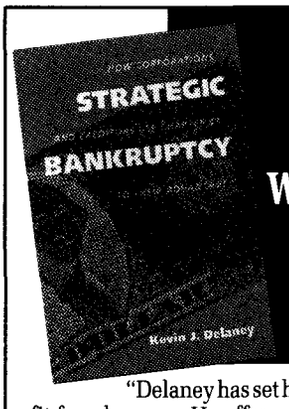
I.

The species known as DWEM, which has only recently been isolated and identified, is already the focus of intense controversy. As usually happens to newly discovered species, it is even being broken down into subspecies; I am informed that a professor at a local university has recently offered a course in DWAM, that is, in Dead White American Males, with readings presumably in such writers as Thoreau, Emerson, and Mark Twain. I propose to discuss only the European type, and, in particular, its first appearance on the face of the planet.

My specimens are certainly dead. In fact, they have been in that condition longer than any other members of the species—for more than 2,500 years. Despite recent suggestions that they came originally from Ethiopia, they were undoubtedly white, or more exactly, a sort of Mediterranean olive. They invented the idea and gave us the name of Europe, fixing its imagined frontier at the long sea passage between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, waters that Xerxes, the Great King of the Persians, crossed, Herodotus tells us, on his way from Asia to Europe. And they created a form of society in which, for all practical purposes (which were, for them, war, politics, competitive athletics, and litigation), women played no part whatsoever.

I refer, of course, to the ancient Greeks, particularly to those of the

BERNARD KNOX is director emeritus of the Center for Hellenic Studies. A slightly different version of this essay was recently delivered as the National Endowment for the Humanities' Twenty-first Annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities in Washington, D.C.



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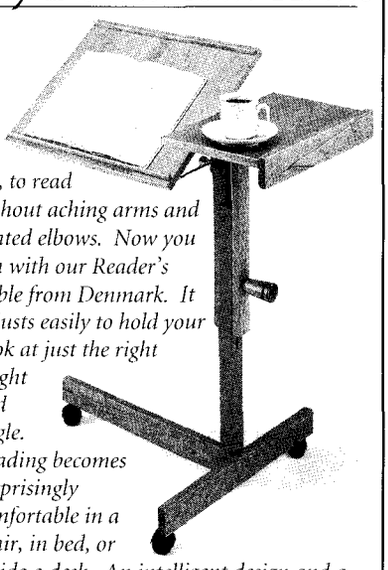

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eighth to the fourth centuries before the birth of Christ. Their assignment to the DWEM category is one of the accomplishments of modern multicultural and feminist criticism; and it is a declaration of their irrelevance. But previous ages spoke of them in very different terms. "We are all Greeks," wrote Shelley in 1822, "our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their roots in Greece." There is some exaggeration here, especially in the matter of the Christian religion, which has deeper and wider roots in Hebrew Palestine than it does in Neoplatonic philosophy; Shelley, who had been expelled from Oxford for writing and circulating a pamphlet titled "The Necessity of Atheism," was not exactly an expert in this field. Still, by 1865 this identification with the ancient Greeks had advanced so far that, as Frank Turner put it in his fascinating book *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*:

> The major commentator on Homer as well as a major translator of the poet, the chief critic and historian of Greek literature, the most significant political historians of Greece and the authors of the then most extensive commentaries on Greek philosophy either were or had recently been members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

The ancient Greeks were not seen just as roots, but as fully formed models of Victorian moral and intellectual culture. George Grote, the "intellectual and tactical leader of the philosophic radicals in the House of Commons," was the author of an influential *History of Greece*, in which the Athenian assembly bears a startling resemblance to the House of Commons, with Pericles as prime minister and his opponent Thucydides the son of Melesias as leader of her majesty's loyal opposition. And William Ewart Gladstone, in the intervals of serving as president of the Board of Trade, colonial secretary, chancellor of the Exchequer, and four terms as prime minister, found time to write a series of books, one of them in three volumes, on Homer, in which he tried to prove that the Greeks, like the Jews, were a chosen people, entrusted by God with "no small share of those treasures of which the Semitic family of Abraham were to be the appointed guardians, on behalf of mankind, until the fullness of time should come." The Victorians appropriated the ancient Greeks, imagined them as contemporaries, and used their writings as weapons in their own ideological wars. If they had been attuned to modern advertising techniques, they might have reversed Shelley's claim and launched the slogan GREEKS 'R' US.

There was a reaction, of course. Scholars such as Jane Harrison, James Frazer, and Andrew Lang, drawing on the rather unreliable anthropological material available to them at the time (unreliable because most of it had been compiled by Christian missionaries who, like Gladstone, tried to detect premonitions of Christianity in what they regarded as the aberrations of the primitive mind), painted a very different picture of the religious ideas and practices of the Greeks. And historians developed a more acerbic view of the realities of Athenian democratic in-fighting: the ten-year sentence of exile imposed on Aristides the Just, the suicide in exile of Themistocles, who had saved Athens in the Persian War, the assassination of Ephialtes, the reformist colleague of Pericles, the temporary overthrow of the democracy by an oligarchic coup d'état in 411 B.C., and the reign of terror of the Thirty Tyrants, backed by victorious Spartan troops, in 404.

In 1938 Louis MacNeice, who was a professor of Greek at the University of London as well as, next to Auden, the finest poet of his generation, bade a melancholy farewell to "the glory that was Greece" in his poem "Autumn Journal." Contemplating the prospect of once more acting, to use his own phrase, as "impresario of the ancient Greeks," he sketched an ironic picture of the professor preparing his lectures on Greek civilization:

> The Glory that was Greece: put it in a
> syllabus, grade it
> Page by page
> To train the mind or even to point a moral
> For the present age:
> Models of logic and lucidity, dignity, sanity,
> The golden mean between opposing
> ills . . .

But then he suddenly turns his back on this familiar and comfortable prospect:

> But I can do nothing so useful or so simple;
> These dead are dead
> And when I should remember the
> paragons of Hellas
> I think instead
> Of the crooks, the adventurers, the opportunists,
> The careless athletes and the fancy boys,
> The hair-splitters, the pedants, the hard-boiled sceptics
> And the Agora and the noise
> Of the demagogues and the quacks; and
> the women pouring
> Libations over graves
> And the trimmers at Delphi and the
> dummies at Sparta and lastly
> I think of the slaves.
>
> And how one can imagine oneself among
> them
> I do not know;
> It was all so unimaginably different
> And all so long ago.

The Roman word for "poet," *vates*, also meant "inspired prophet," and in these lines MacNeice unconsciously anticipated, as poets often do, future developments. For in the fifty or so years since he wrote them, classical scholars have concentrated their attention on the dark underside of what the Victorians hailed as the Greek Miracle. There is hardly an aspect of ancient Greek civilization that has not been relentlessly explored, analyzed, and exposed in its strangeness, its "otherness," to use a once fashionable term borrowed from the French existentialists, by scholars armed with the insights and methods of anthropology, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, structuralism, deconstruction, narratology, semiotics, and all the other proliferating weapons of the modern intellectual armory. If the Victorian vision of Greece could be summed up in the slogan GREEKS 'R' US, the modern critics could retort that GREEKS 'R' THEM, or more pointedly, GREEKS 'R' DWEM.

II.

The results, of course, have been mixed. It might be said of the new approaches to Greek culture and literature what Sophocles in a famous choral ode of the *Antigone* said of mankind in general: "Equipped with the ingenuity of its techniques, a thing subtle beyond expectation, it makes its way sometimes to bad, sometimes to good." In this re-evaluation of the Greek heritage, four areas are of special interest: anthropology, psychology, slavery, and the position of women.

One thing is certain: the strangeness, the "otherness," certainly exists. Many of the normal, routine practices of the ancient Greeks seem to us not just strange, but positively bizarre. One of the most common occurrences in any Greek epic text, for example, is a sacrifice. Sacrifice, for us, is a blandly

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metaphorical word: we talk of a "sacrifice play" in team sports, or more seriously, in the old formulas of the Christian communion service, "We offer and present unto thee O Lord ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee." And if we do think of sacrifice as a real ceremony, we are apt to see it in the romantic aura of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

> Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
> To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
> Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
> And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?

Keats stopped there; his urn didn't show what happened next. But Homer, more than once, gave the full scenario. A domestic animal, the victim, makes its way toward the rough stone altar (it must not be coerced). The presiding sacrificer cuts a tuft of hair from its head and throws it onto the fire that has been lit well in advance; he then scatters barley meal over the animal. Another ministrant swiftly brings an ax down on the animal's neck, cutting the tendons, and the women who are present raise their ritual shriek (*ololuge* is the Greek onomatopoeic word for it). Another celebrant pulls back the animal's head and cuts its throat; the blood is caught in a bowl and splashed onto the altar.

The carcass is now hacked apart. The tough (and valuable) hide is ripped off and set aside. The thigh bones are stripped of flesh, wrapped in layers of fat, and decorated with small pieces of meat from the edible parts of the victim: this is the portion of the gods, and as it is thrown on the fire the thick bluish smoke goes up toward their dwelling place in the clouds. Meanwhile wine for the gods is poured out on the ground. The liver and the heart of the animal are toasted on the fire and eaten, as the serious business of roasting the flesh proper begins.

And all this hard and bloody work takes place in the glaring Aegean sun. The air is heavy with the odors of sweat, blood, burning fat, and the inedible offal of the animal that has been thrown away. And the flies—Homer speaks of them elsewhere as swarming round the milk pails in peace time, and in a more sinister context as feeding on the wounds of a dead warrior—the flies must have been there in swarms, covering the raw meat, stinging the butchers at their work.

It is not like anything we know, but for Homer's audience it was routine, normal, on a par with the launching of a boat, or the arming—or the death—of a warrior; and it was always described in the same formulaic language. All this ritual bloodletting and butchery, moreover, is not only the preliminary to a feast, it is also an act of worship of the Olympian gods.

For us, however, it is a puzzle: an elaborate pattern of behavior that seems at once naive—in its offering to the gods of the bones and fat decorated with some token tidbits of the edible meat—and sophisticated—in the careful ritualization that blunts the shock of the animal's violent death and tries to absolve the celebrants (through its pretense that the victim is willing) of any feeling of guilt. It is the kind of puzzle that often faces anthropologists studying tribal customs in undeveloped countries. Indeed, much of the best modern work on Greek culture has in fact been based on an anthropological approach to the problems it presents.

As early as 1724, a French Jesuit called Joseph Lafitau, who had lived in Canada among the Indians, published a book in which he made the remarkable claim that though he had learned from classical authors many things that helped him understand the people he refers to as "savages," the reverse was also true: "The customs of the Savages afforded me illumination the more easily to understand and explain several matters to be found in ancient authors." This passage is cited by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, one of a brilliant group of French cultural historians who, in recent years, have used the insights and the techniques of modern anthropology to investigate the religious,

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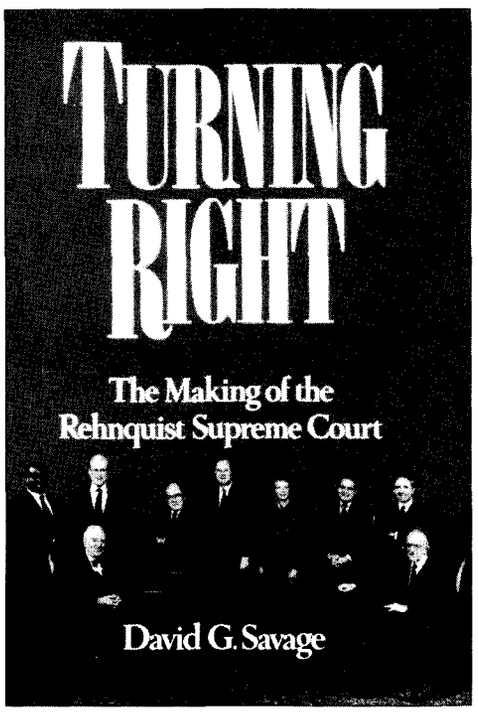

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moral, and political mentality of the ancient Greeks. Louis Gernet (1882-1962), little known in his lifetime, became famous after his student Jean-Pierre Vernant published a collection of his articles under the title *Anthropologie de la Grèce antique* in 1968. Vernant himself, especially concerned with what he calls *psychologie historique*, "the history of the inner man," has given us a wealth of fresh and illuminating perspectives on Greek mythology, thought, religion, art, and literature, with a special emphasis on tragedy. Some of his many books have been works of collaboration: with Marcel Detienne, whose special field is religion and whose book *Les Jardins d'Adonis* is the only successful and rewarding application of the methods of Lévi-Strauss to Greek mythology; and with Vidal-Naquet, a historian who concerns himself with *formes de pensée, formes de société*, whose brilliant essays on ancient Greek politics, society, and literature draw strength and depth from his political engagement in the controversial issues of his own time—the war in Algeria, the Holocaust—and his sense of the vast perspectives, *la longue durée*, of history. (He recently served as editor of a remarkable *Atlas Historique*, a history of the human race from its prehistory to 1987 that makes inspired use of creative cartography and graphs.)

The problem posed by the rites of sacrifice is one of the principal concerns of these investigators; one of the many collaborative volumes issuing from their circle bears the evocative title *La Cuisine du Sacrifice Grec*. It is also the focus of an extraordinary book by Walter Burkert, a book that in its title has added to the already existing classifications of mankind—Homo erectus, Homo habilis, Homo sapiens, Homo sapiens sapiens, and so on—a new one: Homo necans, Man the Killer, Man the Sacrificer. Developing the theories of the Swiss folklorist Karl Meuli, Burkert traces the sacrificial ritual back to the preagricultural hunters, who, by their preservation of its hide, skull, and thigh bones, mimed a symbolic reconstitution of the slaughtered wild beast in a ceremony that absolved them from responsibility for its death—the "comedy of innocence"—and served as a magical deterrent to the extinction of the hunted animal's species. When, in the agricultural phase of human history, the victim was a domestic animal, the comedy of innocence, the pretense that the animal was a willing victim, became even more necessary. Burkert develops his probing analysis with immense learning, applying new insights drawn from his thesis to every aspect of Greek ritual and myth.

III.

One of the principal concerns of the Paris circle, the history of the inner man, was also the subject of an influential German book by Bruno Snell called *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (translated as *The Discovery of the Mind*), which appeared originally in 1948. But unlike the theories of the Parisians, which are always impressive and suggestive even when they cannot be fully accepted, Snell's thesis about the early Greek mind, specifically about the mind of Homer, is fundamentally unsound. Snell's argument is that the discovery of the mind was an achievement of post-Homeric Greece, that in Homer's poems we are in a world that has not yet conceived the idea of the individual consciousness, of the personality.

As might have been expected from one of the editors of a lexicon of early Greek epic, one of the most useful tools for research in the Homeric texts, Snell's method is strictly philological. He points out that there is no word in the Homeric vocabulary for the spiritual or intellectual organ that we call "the soul" or "consciousness." There is, of course, the word *psyche*, but it is used only of whatever it is that leaves the body with the advent of death. For the emotional and intellectual functions of the living man, Homeric language offers a plurality of organs: the *thymos*, seat of violent passions, especially anger; the *phrenes*, seat of rational consideration and corresponding intention to act; *noos*, the organ of thought, of reflection, not connected with action or intention. And the word *phrenes*, which locates the rational faculty in the human body, does not mean, as we would expect, the brain; it means the diaphragm, the midriff.

Snell also claims that the Homeric language has no word for "body" either, except the word *soma*, which, as the ancient commentators pointed out, is used only of the dead body. The living body is thought of not as a unity, but as a collection of separate limbs—arms, legs, torso, head—just as the consciousness appears not as a central entity but as the separate realms of *thymos*, *phrenes*, and *noos*. All this, taken together with the frequency of expressions that attribute human action to divine intervention, seems to him to rule out for Homeric man the existence of a personal self in any sense we can understand. Snell's conclusion is disconcerting. "As a further consequence," he sums up,

> it appears that in the early period the "character" of an individual is not yet recognized.... There is no denying that the great heroes ... are drawn in firm outline and yet the reactions of Achilles, however grand and magnificent, are not explicitly presented in their volitional or intellectual form as character, i.e., as individual intellect and individual soul.

Snell's case has an obvious weakness: it is an argument from silence, always a dangerous argument, especially when applied to two long poems that we know are only a fragment of what once existed in this epic genre. He is conscious of this weakness, though, and he tries to reinforce his position: "Through Homer, we have come to know early European thought in poems of such length that we need not hesitate to draw our conclusions, if necessary, *ex silentio*. If some things do not occur in Homer though our modern mentality would lead us to expect them, we are entitled to assume that he had no knowledge of them." But this, too, rests on a false assumption, on the assumption that the language of the epic poems is the language of Homeric society.

It was not, of course, the language of Homeric society (whatever that phrase may mean), nor of any society that ever existed. It was a language spoken neither by gods nor men, but one devised for epic song, full of ennobling archaisms, and every word and form amenable to the prosodic demands of the epic hexameter line. One scholar (an American this time) has gone so far as to argue that the Mycenean kings transmitted their mobilization orders in epic hexameter, and that pilots used the same medium to pass on sailing directions; but this picture of epic verse as a functional means of everyday communication (which Snell needs for his argument from silence to be taken seriously) is a fantasy. Suppose a soldier made some smart rejoinder to the mobilization order. The officer of the day would surely not have said to him what Homeric characters say to each other in such circumstances: "*poion se epos phugen herkos odonton*"—"What kind of word has escaped the stockade of your teeth?" There must have been some snappy Mycenean equivalent of "At ease, soldier!" And the chances are small that it would have fit the metrical pattern of the hexameter line.

In any case, the lexical method itself, with its assumption that the lack of a descriptive term argues the absence of the phenomenon for which there is no name, is a snare and a delusion. The English language—and I am not talking about 27,000 lines of early English verse, but about the whole range of spoken and written English from Chaucer to, say, Norman Mailer—has no word for that momentary self-congratulatory glow of satisfaction, immediately repressed,

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that is provoked by the news of the misfortunes of our friends, for the reaction "Better him than me" or "It's about time he learned the facts of life." When we want to describe this emotion, we have to fall back on a German word, *Schadenfreude.*

It is to be hoped that no future student of *Geistesgeschichte* will announce, on this basis, that this ignoble emotion was never experienced by people who grew up speaking English—or French, or Italian. Indeed, English propagandists in the First World War made much of this fact, and suggested that only the Huns had such base feelings. They were keeping silent about the fact that the classical Greeks, whom they had all been taught to admire by Dr. Jowett of Balliol, had a very expressive word for it: *epichairekakia,* "rejoicing over calamities." (It is to be found in the *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle, a text through which most Oxford men had been taken at a slow pace.)

Our researcher, however, had better look beyond the absence of such a word from the English and French dictionaries. In the first edition of his *Réflexions Morales,* published in 1665, La Rochefoucauld printed under the number 99 the following maxim:

> *Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplaît pas.* (In the adversities of our best friends we always find something which is not displeasing to us.)

La Rochefoucauld suppressed this scandalous thought in all succeeding editions of his famous maxims, but Dean Swift, in Dublin, had read the first edition and presented the idea, in his own fashion, to the English-speaking public:

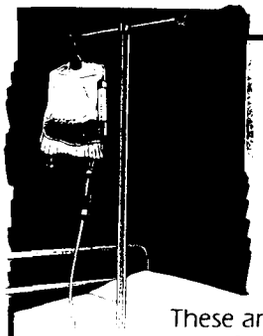
> Wise Rochefoucauld a maxim writ
> Made up of malice, truth and wit . . .
> He says: "Whenever Fortune sends
> Disaster to our dearest friends
> Although we outwardly may grieve
> We oft are laughing in our sleeve."
> And when I think upon't this minute
> I fancy there is something in it.

But the flaws in the argument from silence are even more serious than at first appears. The silence is far from perfect. There is, in fact, a Homeric word for the body as a unit, *demas,* a word that Snell dismisses hurriedly on quite inadmissible technical grounds. And there are many passages in the poems that suggest a Homeric conception of the unified individual personality. Above all, there is the hero's name, the name that he proudly bears and proclaims on all occasions, whether exulting over a fallen enemy or claiming his share of glory, the name that he conceals in the Cyclops's cave and later proudly, and as it turns out rashly, announces to his blinded enemy, the name by which later he proudly identifies himself at the court of the Phaeacians: "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to all mankind for my crafty designs—my fame goes up to the heavens . . . "

This is the heroic self, the name, which in the case of Odysseus as in so many other cases is a speaking name, with more than a hint in it of the hero's nature and destiny. But an individual personality is also suggested in those recurrent passages where a hero addresses some part of himself, his *thymos* or his *kradie,* his heart; the words used imply the central personality of the speaker, a personality to which the part addressed belongs. It might be added that Homer's reference to the diaphragm as the organ of the intelligence is no more surprising than our own frequent reference to the heart as the organ of the emotions or even of the intellect. Pascal knew all about the brain, but that didn't stop him from saying *le coeur a ses raisons,* and a famous American senator once ran for higher office with the slogan, "In your heart, you know he's right."

All this does not mean, of course, that Snell's careful analysis of Homer's language has to be rejected; his lexical approach has thrown light on many aspects of Homeric thought and feeling. What does not stand up to examination, however, is his claim that the language reveals the absence of a conception of individual personality, and that consequently a discussion of character as a base for speech and action is, in the case of the Homeric poems, irrelevant and misleading.

Many scholars who repudiate the extreme position still feel it necessary to warn against the use of the word "character." They give the impression that they think Snell is only half wrong: they claim that in Homer, and for that matter in Greek tragedy, we do not find the fully developed personalities with which we are familiar in modern literature. "However strong their impact as personalities"—I am quoting Albin Lesky, one of the most judicious scholars in this field—"they lack the wealth of individual features—often represented for their own sake—of their modern counterparts." He is obviously thinking of the novel—Emile Zola's gigantic creations, for example, or those of Thomas Mann; in *Buddenbrooks* the reader will find a myriad of "individual features . . . represented for their own sake." But the fact that Homer does not carry this extra



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baggage is something to be thankful for, not regretted. Shakespeare did not carry it, either: he did not tell us what young Hamlet was studying at Wittenberg, or how many children Lady Macbeth had. Homer's characters, like Shakespeare's, like those of all great art, are the product of creative genius working in a rich tradition and equipped with an exquisite sense of artistic economy and balance. This poet knew what so many of his successors never learned, or else forgot: that (to quote Corinna's advice to Pindar) one should sow seeds with the hand, not the sack. Voltaire, many centuries later, put it another way: "The recipe for boredom is—completeness."

The proof of the pudding, in any case, is in the eating. Homer's characters are in fact among the most individually striking ever created. The later Greeks never tired of discussing, in prose and in poetry, the nature of Achilles' pride, the suicidal wrath of Ajax, the versatility of Odysseus; they re-created these figures in terms of their own time on the tragic stage. And subsequent ages have followed their example: Bloom, Dedalus, and Molly are only the most recent of a long series of re-embodiments of Homer's characters. Only Shakespeare can compete with Homer in this extraordinary power to impose his fictional personalities on the imagination of succeeding ages. Only scholars—and I speak of them with sympathy, since I am one of their number—could bring themselves to deny Homer the power to create literary character in the fullest sense of the words, in defiance of the brute fact that Homer's characters have fascinated and obsessed writers and readers for some 2,500 years, longer than any other such set of personalities except the characters of the Hebrew Old Testament.

IV.

The "inner man" is not the only precinct of ancient Greece to be explored with new insights and technologies. Attention has also been directed to two aspects of Greek, and especially Athenian, culture that the Victorians swept under the rug: slavery, and the inferior position, one might even say the subjection, of women. The Victorians were not alone in their indifference to the phenomenon of chattel and other kinds of slavery in Greece; as Moses Finley acidly pointed out, the very full index to *Paideia,* Werner Jaeger's three-volume work on the formation of the Athenian character, which appeared in 1933, contained no entry for "slaves" or "slavery." This despite the fact that, as Finley remarked elsewhere, "there was no action, no belief or institution in Greco-Roman antiquity that was not, in one way or the other, affected by the possibility that someone involved might be a slave."

There were two things that the Greeks of the classical period prized above all others. One was *kleos* or fame, the admiration of his fellow men for his prowess as a soldier, an orator, or an athlete—particularly the last, for winners of events at Olympia and the other great games were so overwhelmed with honors and rewards that it was a commonplace in the odes that poets wrote, on commission, to celebrate their victories to remind them, in ways sometimes subtle and sometimes blunt, that they were not gods but only mortals. The other thing that the Greeks prized was *schole,* or leisure: freedom from the drudgery of work, time to stroll in the columned porticos of the city and discuss politics, points of law, or the latest tragedy, and to

attend the law courts, where suits were under judgment, or the Assembly, where questions of policy, even of peace or war, were under discussion, and to frequent the gymnasium, where they could keep the body in shape and at the same time admire the beauty of the young men who might well be listening to a snub-nosed, barefoot eccentric called Socrates.

Slaves rarely make an appearance in the dialogues of Plato (though there is an exception in the *Meno,* where a house-born slave boy is used for a demonstration that even the lowest form of human life has latent knowledge that can only have come from a previous existence). But without the slaves those long, leisurely conversations, in the gymnasia, the wrestling schools, the houses of the wealthy (Agathon, Callias, Polemarchus), and by the banks of the Ilissus, could not have taken place. Finley is only one of the historians (Vidal-Naquet is another) who have investigated the "peculiar institution" of the Greeks in all its complexity and its diversity—the chattel slaves of Athens, mostly of foreign origin, the native Helots of Sparta and Penestae of Thessaly, the various forms of debt bondage and the many other forms of dependence summarized in the ancient formula "between free and slave."

Slaves were not the only prerequisite, however, for those golden hours of leisure. Someone had to oversee the slaves. A man also needed a wife, whose excellence, according to one of Plato's characters, was "the duty of ordering the house well, looking after the property inside, and obeying her husband." What is meant by "ordering the house well" is made clear in the *Oeconomicus,* another Socratic dialogue, this one by Xenophon. It introduces us to Ischomachus, a young gentleman who has just finished instructing his new bride, a girl of less than fifteen years, in her duties. He tells Socrates, proudly, what he prescribed: she is to train and to supervise a staff of domestic slaves, to organize the efficient storage of equipment and supplies, to store and to manage the distribution of grain, wine, and oil, to make and to meet the annual budget, and to see to the manufacture of household clothes from the raw fleece all the way to the finished garment. She is strongly urged not to use makeup of any kind and to avoid sitting by the fire; she is to be constantly on the move, checking, inspecting, helping. According to Ischomachus, she accepted the program with enthusiasm.

It is typical of the male Greek attitude that we are never told the wife's name. She is just "the wife of Ischomachus." This faceless anonymity was the norm for respectable Athenian women; even in legal cases, where their right or their claim to property may be the issue, they remain nameless. (A certain Neaera, an Athenian woman whose name does turn up in a court room speech, is, according to the speaker, not an Athenian citizen and has had a remarkable career as a prostitute.) When, at the end of the Funeral Speech that proclaimed the glory of the men who had fallen in battle, Pericles addressed a few cold words to their widows, telling them that *their* glory was "to be spoken about least," he was clearly expressing the firm conviction of the Athenian male.

Inside that house of which they were the managers and from which they rarely emerged, Athenian women must have been a formidable presence. Sometimes we get a glimpse of that aspect of the relations between the sexes, as in the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, where the play's heroine talks about wives asking husbands what they have been doing in the assembly today:

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Too many times, as we sat in the house,
we'd hear that you'd done it
again—manhandled another affair of state
with your usual
staggering incompetence. Then, masking
our worry with a nervous laugh
we'd ask you, brightly, "How was the
Assembly today, dear? Anything
in the minutes about Peace? . . . "

But since the books, the inscriptions, and the vase paintings on which we have to base our vision of Athenian home life were all made by men, who no doubt fully agreed with Pericles on the subject of women, such glimpses are rare.

Still, there was much more to be found and studied than previous generations had found (or wished to find), and modern scholars, women prominent among them, have combed, reinterpreted, and assembled the evidence to re-create the life of ancient Greek women, and especially Athenian women, from childhood through initiation rites of various kinds to marriage and motherhood in its legal, religious, and social context. Understandably, some of the female scholars who deal with this material strike a polemical note. One vigorous survey of the position of women in Athens at its political and artistic high point, the fifth century B.C.—a book remarkable for, among other things, its extraordinarily full coverage of the evidence from vase paintings—appeared under the title *The Reign of the Phallus.*

But there is one category of evidence that poses a problem: the picture of women that emerges not from the court speeches, vases, and inscriptions, but from poetry, the epic, and the drama. For classical Greek literature presents us with an astonishing wealth of imposing female characters, in this respect far surpassing the Roman literature that was formed on the Greek model, and rivaling any literature of the medieval or modern world.

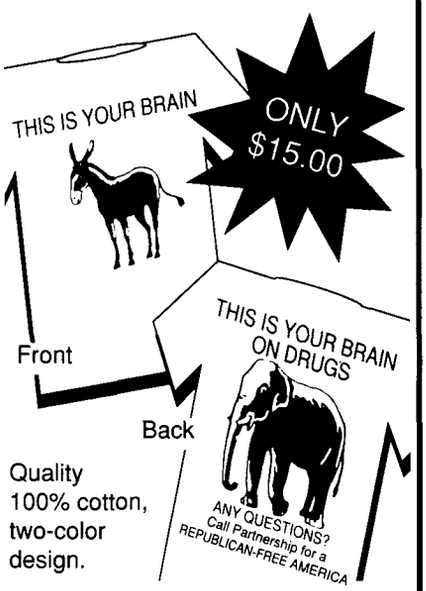
Homer's *Odyssey*, which in its present form is probably a product of the late eighth century B.C., gives us not only Penelope, the faithful and resourceful wife, but also Helen, the wife whose adultery caused a ten-year war and who now presides in queenly fashion over the court of the husband whom she had abandoned. There is also Nausicaa, one of the most charming—and intelligent—young women in all literature, as well as Circe, the enchantress who turns men into swine, and Calypso, the importunate divine mistress.

And Athenian tragedy, at the high point of the reign of the phallus, presents us with a succession of female characters who play leading roles, from Clytemnestra, the wronged and vengeful wife who towers over the male figures of the *Oresteia*, to Antigone, the young woman who, invoking divine law against human decrees, defies the power of the state; from Medea, the abandoned wife who makes her husband pay a terrible price for his ingratitude, to Electra, who, in Sophocles' play, never wavers from her resolve to avenge her father even when all hope seems lost; from Phaedra, wasting away from starvation as she tries, vainly, to resist the love for her stepson that Aphrodite has imposed on her, to Creusa and her passionate appeal to, and denunciation of, the god Apollo when she fears that he is not going to restore to her the child that she secretly bore him. Only one of the surviving tragedies has no female character, and the titles and fragments of the hundreds of lost plays tell the same story: women, on the tragic stage, play the active roles, as man's partner or more often antagonist, that real life, according to our other sources, denied them.

One proposed explanation of this surprising situation is that all the characters, men and women alike, belong to a far-off mythical past and so have little or no relevance to the passions and the concerns of the fifth-century audience. But this defies the realities of theatrical performance. Tragedy, Aristotle rightly says, should arouse pity and fear; it can only do so if it touches the deepest levels of its audience's hopes, wishes, and forebodings. And of course the Athenians did not think of the mythical heroes as far away and long ago; these figures were a forceful presence in the popular mind, as ideal models or awful warnings. When Socrates refuses to save his life by abandoning what he considers his god-given mission, he cites the example of Achilles, who refused to save his life by abandoning his resolve to avenge his friend Patroclus. And when the sentence of death is handed down, he tells the court he looks forward to meeting, in the lower world, such heroes as Palamedes and Ajax, who, like him, were unjustly condemned. In any case, Shakespeare's theater, too, presents characters and places far off or long ago. Not a single one of his plays is set in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean context of his own time and country; and yet no one doubts that he lived up to Hamlet's prescription for the players and showed "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

It is true that with few exceptions, such as Aeschylus's Clytemnestra, the women in Greek tragedy act purely in the domestic sphere, as virgins, wives, or mothers, or if beyond it as in the case of Electra, through men. Tragedy gives us a

"Okay, one more time..."



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picture of a life on which our prose documents are silent, a picture of the inner life of the house, the intimacy of the relationships between husband and wife, mother and son, father and daughter. It shows the wife and mother in that confined space where she is both queen and prisoner—a picture that is very different from the one suggested by the bland eulogies of the funeral inscriptions. It suggests what one would have suspected, that in many cases the result of confining a wife to the house, the slaves, and the children was to create a potentially explosive, even dangerous, force.

Of course, Greek myth provided plenty of examples of women as dangerous, as the adversary, from the Amazons who engaged in open warfare against men to child-killers such as Medea and Procne, husband-killers such as Clytemnestra and Deianira, adulterous seducers such as Stheneboea or (in Euripides' lost first version) Phaedra. It even provided dangerous women in large groups, like the fifty daughters of Danaus, forty-nine of whom slaughtered their husbands on their wedding night, or the women of the island of Lemnos who went to the extreme limit of defiance of the male hierarchy by murdering their husbands and marrying their slaves. And tragedy eagerly embraced such themes.

The chorus in Aeschylus's *Suppliants* are the daughters of Danaus; by threatening to hang themselves on the statues of the city's gods, they force a reluctant king into fighting a battle for them in which he loses his own life, and although the last two plays of the trilogy are lost, we know that forty-nine of them duly murdered their husbands. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, Deianira (whose name means "husband-killer") is the unwitting and unwilling agent of the death of her husband, Heracles. In the seventeen tragedies of Euripides that have survived intact, Phaedra, Electra, and Agave kill or help kill a man, Medea kills a man and her male children, Hecuba blinds a man, and Creusa tries to kill one, while on the other hand Alcestis gives her life to save her husband's, and Iphigenia, Macaria, and Polyxena are sacrificed at the altar by men. Women's voices are so insistent on the Euripidean stage that Aristophanes can have him say, in the *Frogs*, that in his plays, "They all stepped up to speak their piece, the mistress spoke, the slave spoke too, / the master spoke, the daughter spoke, the grandma spoke."

Some feminist critics have developed the argument that such a concentration on women in the public performance of tragedy was simply a reinforcement of the dominant male ideology, a justification of the seclusion and the repression of women. The plays, written by men and acted by an all-male cast, were performed at an official festival of the male-dominated democracy; the decision to award first, second, and third prize was in the hands of male judges, and, even more important, the selection of the three playwrights who were to have their plays produced was also the prerogative of male officials. The plays, even those of Euripides, who has often been considered sympathetic to women, must have been a reaffirmation of the male values of Athenian society.

Interpretations along these lines have been advanced with greater or lesser degrees of subtlety. Still, even the most fair-minded and rewarding treatment of the role of women in tragedy, Froma Zeitlin's chapter called "Playing the Other" in *Nothing To Do with Dionysus?*, while it explores brilliantly the theme that "drama ... tests masculine values only to find those alone inadequate to the complexities of the situation," also finds that "in the end tragedy arrives at closures that generally reassert male, often paternal, structures of authority."

It is true, of course, that women in tragedy, even in Euripides, are almost always agents of male destruction or willing sacrificial victims. The trouble is that Euripides loads the dice against any easy acceptance of these situations at face value. He does this by his presentation of the male characters involved. Iphigenia gives her life for Greece, but the men for whom she gives it—Agamemnon, Menelaus, Calchas, Odysseus, even Achilles—are unmasked as weaklings, braggarts, cowards, and base intriguers. In *Alcestis*, a wife surrenders her own life to save her husband's in ideal Athenian wifely fashion, but the lines that Euripides puts in the husband's mouth must have made the audience sit up.

After all, if your wife agrees to die instead of you (and in this age of organ transplants this play could be less of a fairy tale than it was for the Athenians), you should know better than to react to her last dying wails with the customary formulas of the deathbed scene. You are the one husband in the world who cannot and must not say, as Admetus says, "In the name of the gods do not have the heart to abandon me—in the name of your children whom you will leave behind orphaned ... raise your head up—be strong, endure—If you die I don't want to live." Above all, you don't say: "If I had the tongue and song of Orpheus, so that, enchanting Demeter's daughter or her husband by my music, I might have taken you from Hades, I would have gone below and neither Pluto's hound nor Charon the ferryman of souls would have prevented me from bringing you back to life and the light of the sun." He didn't have to go to such heroic lengths; he could just have died when his time came. And, as if this were not enough to set one's teeth on edge, Alcestis's death is followed by a quarrel between the husband and his father, who had declined, like his mother, to take his place in the grave. It is the most electric scene in the play, a sordid and bitter quarrel between two egoists, staged over the body of the woman whose self-sacrifice has made it possible for her husband to denounce his mother and father as cowards, and to disown them.

Jason, too, is condemned by his own words. Reminded by Medea that she saved his life in Colchis and left behind not only her family but also her status as a princess, he answers complacently that he owes his success at Colchis not to Medea, but to Aphrodite alone of gods and men; Medea was merely so madly in love with him that she couldn't help herself. In any case, he goes on to say, she has been amply repaid for what little she did do for him. "You left a savage country, to live in Greece; here you have known justice ..." Medea will kill her sons, and Jason will lose not only them but also his bride and her father and his hope of a new kingdom; but after his speech it is hard to feel anything for him but contempt.

And the end of the play is no reassertion of "male ... structures of authority." Jason is abandoned even by the gods to whom he appeals; they send down a magic chariot in which Medea escapes from Corinth. What is more, it is in this play that one of the fundamental male structures of authority is specifically repudiated: the ideal of martial glory, the sanctification of male heroic death in battle that is so memorable a feature of Pericles' Funeral Speech. "*They* say," Medea tells the chorus of Corinthian women, "*they* say we live a life free from danger in the house, while they fight, spear in hand. What fools! I'd be ready to take my stand in the shield line three times rather than give birth just once." That biological function that was for the Greek male chauvinist the only justification for woman's existence—"There ought to have been some other way," says Jason later on in the play, "for men to breed sons ..."—that despised but necessary natural function is here given pride of place above the martial valor that was the highest virtue of the man and the citizen.

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V.

The relocation of Attic tragedy in its social and religious context has added much to our understanding of it. And yet the attempt to cut it down to size, to make it a prisoner of its environment, limited in scope by the constraints of Athenian male ideology, is a waste of effort. The genie cannot be put back in the bottle. For great literature, though fashioned for and by its time and place, always reaches out beyond, speaking to later generations as well; it is, to use the terms of Jonson's eulogy of Shakespeare, not only of an age, but for all time. Many of the greatest poets are more fully appreciated by later ages than by their own. They foreshadow and help to create the sensibilities of the generations that come after them.

Euripides is a case in point. In the centuries that followed the end of Athens's great age, Aeschylus and Sophocles were revered as classics, but Euripides was performed. We have a vivid reminder of this fact in the shape of a broken piece of stone, part of an inscription of the fourth century B.C. that records the names of the nine tragedies offered by three poets at the Great Dionysia, together with the name of the author of the "old tragedy" regularly offered at this time in addition to the new ones. It covers the years 341, 340, and 339 B.C., and in each year the "old tragedy" was by Euripides.

Of course, he is not the only one to survive on the later stage. In recent years the plays of all three Greek tragic masters, in translation and in adaptation, have found fresh audiences on stage and screen, in theaters from Berlin to Edinburgh, from New York to San Diego; and they speak to us as if the centuries between our time and theirs had never been. In theaters all over the world, versions of Sophocles' *Antigone,* prominent among them those of Anouilh and Brecht, have faced modern audiences with the problem that Sophocles posed to his Athenian audience—the clash of loyalties, to the state and to older, higher obligations.

In Ireland, at Derry, the Irish poet Seamus Heaney recently produced his version of the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, a play about a victim of injustice so embittered by suffering and by brooding on his wrongs that when salvation and a cure for his debilitating disease are offered by his enemies, for their own cynical purposes, he cannot bring himself to accept it; it takes a voice from the heavens to change his mind. Heaney wrote into what is for the most part a faithful as well as brilliant translation of the Sophoclean play a moral for his country and his times:

> History says, *Don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave.*
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.
>
> So hope for a great sea-change
> On the far side of revenge.
> Believe that a further shore
> Is reachable from here.
> Believe in miracles
> And cures and healing wells.

And we have seen, too, *Iphigenia in Aulis* played in New York as a protest against our war in Vietnam, and a French version of Euripides' *Trojan Women* produced in Paris as a protest against the French war in Algeria.

The Greeks are still very much with us. Even that strange ritual of sacrifice with which we started, that epitome of "otherness" so alien to our thought and our feeling, has its resonances in our world. We too might need some equivalent of the "comedy of innocence" if we had to kill a domestic animal with our own hands every time we ate meat. As it is, we leave the business of killing to others and try not to think about it. But in recent years many of us have indeed begun to think about it, to face the mechanical horrors of the stockyard slaughterhouse and worse, the refined cruelty of a system that raises animals confined and force-fed in narrow cages, so that even before its death the victim is deprived of any real life. Some of us have turned away altogether from eating meat, enough of us that public institutions and airlines make provisions for vegetarian meals. And in the ancient world, too, there were those—Pythagoreans and Orphics—who refused to take part in the sacrifice and the consumption of meat, even though it cut them off from the community and made them a people apart, and sometimes persecuted.

In fact, when one thinks again of that list of things that MacNeice, the Anglo-Irishman writing in Hampstead in 1938, found so unimaginably different, one can not help feeling that to an American, especially to an American living in or near the city of Washington, D.C., in the spring of 1992, they seem all too familiar. "When I should remember the paragons of Hellas," he wrote, "I think instead

> Of the crooks, the adventurers, the opportunists,
> The careless athletes and the fancy boys,
> The hair-splitters, the pedants, the hard-boiled sceptics
> And the Agora and the noise
> Of the demagogues and the quacks; and the women pouring
> Libations over graves
> And the trimmers at Delphi and the dummies at Sparta and lastly
> I think of the slaves.

The Agora was the marketplace, for which we have substituted the shopping mall. Women today may not pour libations on graves, but we have our macabre funeral parlors, where the late lamented, embalmed and touched up for the occasion, make a last appearance for relatives and friends. Our trimmers are not at Delphi, they are much closer to home. And our dummies are not at Sparta—but we have them all right. As for the slaves: Americans need no reminder that 150 years ago there were slaves and slaveowners on both sides of the Potomac.

Indeed, when we think of the two great flaws in Athenian democracy that recent scholarship has explored and emphasized, we ought to remember not only that slavery and male dominance were characteristic of all ancient societies, but also that we, of all people, have no right to cast the first stone. Pericles' proud claim for Athenian democracy—power in the hands of the people, equality before the law—makes no mention of the slaves, but our Declaration of Independence, according to which "all men are created free and equal," does not mention them either, although the man who drafted it and many of those who signed it were owners of African slaves. That wrong was finally righted only by a bloody and destructive civil war, but we are still suffering the consequences of those many years of injustice. The wound in the commonweal is not healed yet, and we have to pray and to believe, like Heaney, that "a further shore / Is

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reachable from here," that "hope and history" may "rhyme."

As for the other flaw, the exclusion of women from Athenian public life, we should not forget that women in these United States had to struggle for more than half a century before the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution gave them full voting rights in 1920; that Great Britain reluctantly made the same concession in 1928; and that the French took the last word of the revolutionary slogan *"liberté, egalité, fraternité"* so literally that French women were not given the right to vote until 1945.

All this does not entitle us, of course, to discard the results of the re-evaluation of Greek culture that has emphasized its "otherness," the attitudes and the institutions that resemble those of Egypt and Babylon, not to mention those of Lafitau's Algonquins, Hurons, and Iroquois. But we should not forget the astonishing originality that sets the Greeks apart, that makes them unique. They invented democracy more than 2,000 years before any modern Western nation took the first steps toward it. They invented not only philosophy and the theater, but also the model of a national literature, with its canon of great writers, its critics and commentators, its libraries. They invented organized, competitive athletics. They invented political theory, rhetoric, biology, zoology, the atomic theory. One could go on. Though we can no longer say, with Shelley, that we are all Greeks, nor can we claim, as the Victorians might have claimed, that GREEKS 'R' US, we must always acknowledge how greatly, how deeply, how irrevocably, we remain in their debt. •

Wonder Woman

BY CHRISTINE STANSELL

Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume One, 1884-1933 by Blanche Wiesen Cook

(Viking, 587 pp., $27.50)

This is biography as exemplary life. Eleanor Roosevelt emerges from Blanche Wiesen Cook's account as just about the finest person of the twentieth century, "a bellwether for our belief system." When she suffered, she suffered nobly. What she accomplished, she accomplished magnificently. Her failures were providential; her suffering therapeutic. Her politics were presciently poised between the idealistic and strategic; her personal life was judiciously balanced between public wifely fidelity and private lesbian loves.

In short, Cook has given us her own updated version of the revered persona that Roosevelt helped to create in the public eye during her lifetime. This is "a woman who insists on her right to self-identity, a woman who creates herself over and over again, a woman of consummate power and courageous vision," the author announces. The book swells symphonically with the heroic characters of its subjects, not only the noble Eleanor but the titanic FDR. "History presented no other couple similarly equal in spirit, commitment, and ambition," Cook proposes, incredibly. "Giant personalities, powerful egos, inspiring and commanding presences."

Eleanor's ascension to her role in this supposedly larger-than-life drama began inauspiciously enough. She was born in 1884 into an old patrician clan on the Hudson descended from the Livingstons, to Anna Hall Roosevelt, a cold society beauty, and the unfortunate Elliott (TR's brother), a wastrel and severe alcoholic edging into the terminal stages of the disease. Anna Roosevelt, temperamentally self-absorbed to begin with, was rendered even more distant from her children by her utter preoccupation with the Promethean task of patching up the appearances that her miserable drunken husband continually shattered; on the few occasions that she did turn her attention to her daughter, it was to deliver steely admonitions like "you have no looks, so see to it that you have manners." Her father, charming and vulnerable, was mostly drunk and mostly absent. Sporadically, however, he returned from his alcoholic bouts and sojourns abroad to drench the forlorn little girl in sentimental effusions and professions of intimacies always just around the corner.

The childhood was Edith Wharton territory. Indeed, for her entire youth Eleanor seemed doomed to live the insufferably closeted life of a rich girl at the turn of the century. The prizes of modernity lavished on two generations of New Women between the end of the Civil War and the outbreak of World War I—college educations, training for the professions, the freedom to marry late or not to marry at all—were never to be hers. Only in the 1920s, long after she had married, was she able to ride the tails of the women's movement to a career of her own as a magazine writer, teacher, and Democratic Party leader—and even then, whatever her gifts for the work, it was always linked to her husband's success.

She grew up trooping dutifully to the marching orders of her class. She literally marched: after her mother's death in 1892, her grandmother sent her on forced hikes up and down the road outside their estate with a stick hooked under her elbows behind her back to promote good posture. Like many children of alcoholics, Eleanor Roosevelt was compulsively, incurably sweet-tempered, and throughout much of the first half of her life she suffered such indignities and ill treatment with scarcely a whimper of protest. There were balls, country weekends, and a New York debut, all in company with a crowd of eminently forgettable aristocratic kin and other wealthy and titled personages. Her shyness and timidity often turned social occasions into an ordeal.

It is to Cook's credit that she chronicles this milieu carefully and respectfully; the temptations must have been great to ironize an utterly vacuous fin-de-siècle aristocracy, with its penchant for frozen smiles, trampling upon women, and stowing away its troublesome members in American asylums and European pensions. The story is laden with emotional interest—Cook quotes at length from family letters in which the normally decorous Roosevelts and Halls let themselves rip—and its social psychology is untouched, so far as I know, in any cultural history of the late nineteenth-century American upper class. Cook does not always know how to make the fullest analytical use of her material, but she does allow us to feel for the sodden and affecting Elliott and for the abandoned child for whom his fits of love had to suffice as her heart's ease.

Eleanor's one adolescent escape was to Allenswood, a progressive school in England that served the daughters of wealthy European and American liberals; the Strachey girls and the heiress and future Paris *salonnière* Natalie Barney were among its students. Allenswood's founder and head was Marie Souvestre, an educator in the New Woman mold: unmarried, high-minded, and

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imbued with ambition for, and a fierce pride in, her sex. At Allenswood, Eleanor immersed herself joyfully in a boarding-school milieu of intimate, intense, and diffusely erotic ties between women: sensuous relationships that, in a pre-Freudian era, did not awaken the same vigilance and condemnation that schoolgirl crushes would attract in later years.

Allenswood, in Cook's view, was the making of Eleanor Roosevelt. She was a favorite of Souvestre's, and she adored her teacher in return. "Eleanor had never before experienced female authority as a freeing rather than a constraining force," Cook argues. "At Allenswood she was finally given permission to be herself." Souvestre encouraged her intellect, her athletic ability, and her friendship with other girls; she talked with her about liberal politics; she took Eleanor with her to travel on the Continent during holidays. Cook treats the connection between girl and woman delicately, but she makes it clear that Souvestre was Eleanor's first great love. The older woman's sense of intellectual and social placement in a liberal bourgeoisie gave the damaged daughter of a stultified patriciate a new sense of possibility in the world.

Some of the credit for the transformation of wallflower to political activist, of course, goes to her husband. Eleanor married Franklin in 1905, when she was 21 and he was 23, the year after he graduated from Harvard. Neither had much experience of adult life; chaperones and a constant round of social engagements had kept both within the bounds of surveillance and family and class. After they married, the couple lived with Franklin's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, until 1910, when he was elected to the New York state Senate and the family moved to Albany. Five of the Roosevelt children were raised in their grandmother's house under her strong rule, tended by servants and nannies, whom she, not their mother, picked. The young wife and mother, burdened by continual pregnancies, the grief of one baby's death, and the absence of a home—let alone a room—of her own, grew severely depressed.

You might expect Eleanor's feminist biographer, given the acquiescence of FDR in this scenario, to cast a baleful eye on the fellow. In his 20s, the man was only beginning to become something other than a Harvard lightweight and mama's boy. From the earliest years of their marriage he stayed out late and cheerfully philandered his way up and down the East Coast. He never lifted a finger to help with his many children and, with the same sunny obliviousness, allowed his mother to tyrannize over his wife for years. But FDR's wonderfully genial temperament seems to have affected Cook, too, who takes a liberal and urbane view of the man—"high-spirited, handsome, energetic, dashing"—even of his sexual ethics. "Women flocked to him," she muses admiringly.

It is what he gave to Eleanor, rather than the damage he inflicted, that interests her—even if the gifts cost him nothing, the gratuitous byproducts of his own success. Franklin's entrance into politics, Cook stresses, bestowed on Eleanor her first home of her own and the chance to move in a world separate from the tiny, claustrophobic sphere ruled by her aunts and mother-in-law. Out of her identity as politician's wife, she found the materials to construct an adult life distinct from her identity as a Roosevelt daughter. In Albany, she "went around and found out what his colleagues, and their wives, really thought. She went out among his constituents and talked with them."

Cook depicts the adult Eleanor Roosevelt as a figure of zestful, courageous, and forward-looking political activism. The book's characteristic note is a trum-

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peting flourish that ushers in a further episode of ER's fabulously idealistic progressivism. In Cook's interpretation, these politics do not take shape historically but rather spring to life fully formed, ahistorical virtues transcending time and place: Feminism, Anti-Racism, Solidarity with Labor. "She made the noblest values seem globally achievable.... That is how she lived her life." These are powerful—indeed near mythical—claims, but Cook shows little of their substance.

Recounting the early years, for instance, she makes much of the subversiveness of ER's insistence on taking public transportation to the Lower East Side when she taught classes in a settlement house. Eleanor remembered that "the walk across the Bowery filled me with a certain amount of terror and I often waited on a corner, watching, with a great deal of trepidation, men come out of the saloons or shabby hotels nearby." From this memory, Cook sententiously concludes that "Eleanor Roosevelt never compromised her decision to take public transportation. She preferred to walk through the streets to observe the Bowery's lost and lonely men.... They gave the concerned debutante yet another level of insight into the ravages of alcoholism." Similarly, Roosevelt's decision to replace a staff of white servants with black help during the spring before the D.C. race riot of 1919 becomes "stunning" and audacious, a harbinger of a militant anti-racism.

It is not that such incidents are negligible or uninteresting in their own right, as aspects of the transformation of one kind of woman, the "concerned debutante," into another, the Democratic party boss. Indeed, the central method of modern feminist biography has been to confer significance on seemingly minor turns of character. The problem is that Cook never provides a context, never situates any of these departures within a broader range of historically available options. Does hiring black servants in a Southern city—where, by Cook's own account, FDR's boss Josephus Daniels had already told Eleanor to fire her all-white staff, since only "Negroes" should do servile work—really demonstrate an incipient anti-racism? And in 1905—when America's New Women were beginning to dash unchaperoned all around the world—does ER's insistence on taking street cars instead of a chauffeured limousine make her a flamboyant feminist heroine, or rather a wealthy young woman in a state of mild rebellion?

In a similar fashion, Cook sees positions as courageous and radical chiefly because Eleanor Roosevelt espoused them. Cook argues, to take one instance, that the Roosevelts diverged in their responses to the Red Scare of 1919-20: FDR capitulated to anti-Bolshevik hysteria while ER, high-minded and principled, spoke out against the repression of radicals. The case principally rests, however, on assertions about ER's state of mind extrapolated from the scantest of evidence and one resolution she introduced at the League of Women Voters' convention in 1921 to condemn Calvin Coolidge's polemic against women's colleges as hotbeds of Bolshevism. On this frail bark Cook floats a typically booming assessment of Roosevelt's political virtue: "She rarely hesitated when a cause was just and compelling."

This interpretation does little, in sum, to complicate our understanding of Roosevelt as a mild social feminist, tied to the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and committed, like other modernizers of the 1920s, to what the historian Alan Dawley has recently termed "managerial liberalism." Cook asserts Roosevelt's deep connectedness to workingwomen and workingwomen's issues, yet her acquaintance with the labor organizer Rose Schneiderman—mentioned but never examined—stands in for the entire range of these supposed personal ties.

The discussion of the women's movement in the 1920s is potted political history, utterly lacking in the nuance and interest that recent historians have given to the controversy involving the rift between advocates of protective legislation for women workers—Roosevelt's friends—and feminist proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. Other feminist scholars—notably Susan Ware—have explored Roosevelt's politics in depth and made a case for her as a force in bridging a set of older social concerns for workingwomen and the agenda of the New Deal. Cook does nothing to expand on this interpretation, which casts Roosevelt as a historical actor of her time and place; she insists, rather, on celebrating Roosevelt's right thinking. Yet for all of Roosevelt's visibility within 1920s liberalism, it's hard to escape the sense that she maneuvered politically and took her risks—as with the League of Women Voters' amendment—within a very circumscribed world.

Cook is more interesting on Roosevelt's private life. Her revelations about FDR's and ER's sexual entanglements are not new, but she weaves them into an interpretation of the marriage that is tinged with a bracing urbanity. Her tone, monotonous and preachy when she pronounces upon politics, acquires some warmth and relish when it comes to sex. She shrewdly sketches the dialectics of emotional and sexual fidelity, the bargains struck and deals made, the precarious reciprocity achieved between husband and wife. FDR's affair with Lucy Mercer, as Cook presents it, devastated Eleanor, but it also freed her to reconfigure her marriage and her own erotic life. The partners struck the common bargain of longtime spouses: emotional solidarity for sexual fidelity, friendship for passion, form for substance. They came to protect and defend each other, she argues nicely, "with the vigor and strength of a bond sealed by the deepest pain. If there had been too much pain for their relationship to become an unselfish love, it became a most unselfish partnership."

Cook is at her best—and most convincing—in showing how entirely Eleanor came into her own after the Mercer affair and how much her energies and novel sense of autonomy derived from a newly discovered sexual well-being. She probably had her first erotic experiences with women in the 1920s, after she became an intimate in the circle of lesbians—Nancy Cook, Esther Lape, Elizabeth Read, Marion Dickerman—who were her political associates in New York. And in 1929, after FDR had become governor of New York, she embarked on what Cook argues persuasively was a long, passionate affair with her bodyguard Earl Miller (a mensch whose sexiness, devotion to his "Lady," and manly refusal to tell any tales on her in later years make him, for female heterosexual readers, the real heartthrob of the book). By the time she met reporter Lorena Hitchcock in 1940 in her first days as First Lady, she had had enough experiences with transgressive love with both sexes to enable her to plunge with apparent calm into a torrid affair in the very heart of the White House.

It is unclear how "unselfish" anything about his marriage ever was for FDR, who went his own way, dispensing political connections and spare houses with patrician, careless generosity. When Eleanor's friendships with her New York companions coalesced, Franklin cheerfully proposed that she build a hideaway and retreat for herself and the "girls"—"the Honeymoon Cottage," he later called it—on his sprawling property at Hyde Park. Meanwhile, as he convalesced from polio, he set up virtually a second marriage with his secretary Missy Lehand in Warm Springs, Georgia. Later he seems to have sportingly ignored his wife's affair with Earl Miller. Cook's cosmopolitan view of these arrangements

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does succeed in highlighting what was distinctive about FDR. If he seems very much a man of his class background—and of Washington—in his sense of entitlement to sexual access to women, he also displayed a certain liberality of patriarchal spirit in allowing Eleanor to go her own way as well.

Yet there is sometimes a *Town and Country* air to Cook's admiring accounts of the racier aspects of the Roosevelts' lives. The principals all seem so good-looking and so well-dressed. Eleanor's women friends "celebrated excellence in food and champagne, art and conversation." "Their costumes were dashing, and they dressed for each other. Their clothes were custom-made of the finest imported fabrics." There is a great deal about candlelit dinners, cut flowers, monogrammed linen, and cultivated conversation. We are meant to marvel at Eleanor's free-spiritedness, her companions, children, and lovers strewn among various well-appointed households, convening at ritual family occasions, everyone tended in their shifting alliances by invisible and discreet servants. In some respects, the Roosevelt ménage recalls the contemporaneous Bloomsbury set, or Vita and Harold Sackville-West's similarly sunny infidelities played out in the tweedy English countryside. One sometimes bridles at the author's paeans to Roosevelt-style free love: Who couldn't have a heterodox sex life with two or three houses, children stowed away with nannies, and servants to pick up the towels?

Is this really a self-transformative life, as Cook announces, or is it a life spent maneuvering in small and strategic ways within very tight and privileged confines? There is more to come, she promises us, in a second volume: about Eleanor Roosevelt's empathy for the American poor, her concern for civil rights, her identification with the murdered Jews of Europe (despite a sniffy anti-Semitism—whisked over by Cook—that is garden variety American upper class). But meanwhile readers may long for some relief from this perfectly orchestrated self.

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The Trouble with Populism

BY ALAN EHRENHALT

Who Will Tell the People? The Betrayal of American Democracy by William Greider

(Simon and Schuster, 454 pp., $25)

Fifteen years ago, on the day of Jimmy Carter's inauguration, *The Washington Post* published a special section commemorating the event, the new president, and the political world he was about to inherit. There must have been a dozen long stories in that section. I probably read most of them, but by lunchtime I had forgotten them all, except one. It was an article by William Greider, of the *Post*'s national desk, explaining regulatory politics in the national capital. According to Greider, it was less like an exercise in serious public policy than like an Oriental bazaar: the government makes rules and the industries come to town and haggle over them endlessly like rug traders at an open-air market in Baghdad or Istanbul; and the richest and the cleverest hagglers usually come away with the spoils of regulation—contracts, licenses, permission to bend the rules.

Perhaps that is old news these days, but when I read it in 1977 I felt as if I had been hit in the face with a simple truth. Of course that was how Washington worked. It had been happening in front of our eyes for a long time; it was just that nobody had quite put it that way before. In the ensuing years, many of the contributors to that inauguration day paper have settled into comfortable middle age as distillers of the conventional wisdom for audiences in Washington and beyond. Greider, by contrast, has chosen the gadfly path, scrutinizing public institutions to see what they are made of, and asking simple questions that most reporters never thought to ask.

In the early days, Greider seemed to be more a skeptic than an ideologue; he was the boy at the parade asking why the emperor didn't seem to be wearing any clothes. Over the past decade, though, he has gradually evolved into a hardened populist, insisting that the failures of government have less to do with foolishness than with overt manipulation and greed.

In the early days of the Reagan administration, Greider remarked upon the nakedness of David Stockman, the OMB, and the whole Reagan economic policy, based as it was on numbers and assumptions that might as well have been pulled at random out of a paper bag. In *The Education of David Stockman*, published in 1982, Greider painted the picture of an executive leadership that, beneath the orderly veneer of interviews and public statements, wandered in a thicket of ignorance and chaos. "Is no one in control, even at the highest levels of power?" he asked. (His answer was yes. Nobody was.)

By 1987, when he published *Secrets of the Temple*, his massive criticism of the Federal Reserve Board, Greider had moved a considerable distance: that is, his conversion to populism was just about complete. The Fed was not naked, or ignorant; it was deliberately obscurantist. It was "priests and ritual, sacred secrets that sustained belief." It treated money as a "sacred totem" whose mysteries the people should not penetrate too deeply. It did this, Greider said, in the interest of protecting the one industry in America the Fed truly cared about—the money industry. Only Wall Street, in Greider's opinion, really benefited from the high interest rates that Paul Volcker had set in motion in 1979 and stubbornly refused to adjust throughout the recession that followed.

Greider's new book is much more sweeping, in scope if not in length, than anything he has done before. It undertakes nothing less than a dissection of contemporary American democracy. And it completes the author's long journey from old-fashioned newsroom skeptic to thoroughgoing ideologue of the populist left. Ours is a government, Greider has finally concluded, that understands exactly what it is doing. It is a government deliberately and systematically conducted by and for the privileged interests of the society, and at the expense of everyone else. Only "the people" are deceived.

Just who qualifies for inclusion among "the people" is never precisely clear. At times Greider seems to be preaching a fairly strict class politics; at other times he seems to be more of a sentimentalist, summoning up a mystical, Carl Sandburg-like democratic revival from the depths of American experience. But there is no ambiguity about the fundamental injustice that Greider believes has

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come to infect the nation's public life. "What exists behind the formal shell," he writes,

> is a systemic breakdown of the shared civil values we call democracy.... The power to decide things has gravitated from the many to the few.... Instead of popular will, the government now responds more often to narrow webs of power—the interests of major economic organizations and concentrated wealth and the influential elites surrounding them.

This is obviously not a new indictment. But no one in many years has made it as forcefully as Greider, at his level of detail or with his powers of observation. His book is not a rehashing of scandal, or an attempt to understand the world through the endless massaging of campaign finance reports. This is a systematic flaying of just about all the major institutions of the American political system: Congress, the executive branch, the two political parties, the media, the corporations that finance the process. Sometimes the flaying is done inadvertently by the sort of people whose power Greider most resents. Thus, at one point he manages to get Stuart Eizenstat to confess that "of course the law's up for grabs. The law's always up for grabs. That's why you win elections and appoint judges."

The political system that Greider portrays is one in which nothing is quite as it seems. Public opinion that sounds genuine and heartfelt is, in reality, completely manufactured. When the automobile industry wants to derail an amendment establishing tougher fuel efficiency standards, it pays a "grass-roots lobbying specialist" upward of $500,000 to convince farmers, sheriffs, and scoutmasters that big cars might be forced off the highway; and the result is a blizzard of phony "citizen concern." Presidents are elected by practicing a bait-and-switch politics that promises the voters a set of attractive public policies and then abandons them. Reagan ran in 1980 on a promise to lower taxes, but the decisions of his administration resulted in a tax increase for 90 percent of American families. While Bush was making his "read my lips" promise, his advisers were telling Wall Street not to take it seriously.

Comprehensive environmental laws are enacted with great fanfare, and then simply not enforced. Twenty years after passage of the Clean Air Act, 140 factories were still dispensing toxic industrial chemicals into the atmosphere, and the Environmental Protection Agency had made little effort to enforce emissions standards on any of them, let alone shut the factories down. Decisions made in the public interest by executive departments and independent agencies are quietly killed at the White House at the request of corporations that would be inconvenienced by them. In the Reagan and Bush years, according to Greider, rules gutted this way have included ones requiring air bags in automobiles, prescribing warning labels for children's aspirin, strengthening safety for offshore oil drillers, and imposing controls on cotton dust in the textile industry.

So Greider's indictment proceeds, enveloping every branch of government and every major area of public policy. Many of the particulars have been reported elsewhere before. But that, in a way, is Greider's point: the message is not getting through. "Politics and government are awash in information," he writes, "yet none of it communicates timely warnings to the citizens.... No one is intelligently monitoring the action for the taxpayers and alerting them to trouble.... With no one watching, those in power are left free to serve their narrow interests—protecting themselves and their friends."

Those who do not wish to take Greider seriously will find it possible to dismiss him as a leftist critic of Republican power. Although he has been at work for nearly twenty years scrutinizing "the system," he gleans the bulk of his horror stories from the Reagan and Bush administrations. But in fact it seems clear that the partisan appearance of his crusade is mostly an accident of timing: there is not much Greider can do about the slant of his indictments until he gets a Democratic specimen for dissection. Nothing in this book suggests that Greider likes the current Democratic Party any better than he likes the GOP.

In any case, the real issue is not the catalog of misdeeds. They happened. Government has a habit of doing terrible things when no one is looking. The real question is whether all of this really represents a "breakdown of American democracy," as Greider's proclaims, or simply one more reminder that there is a sleazy underside to all political systems. In order to have broken down, the system must at one time have worked smoothly; but Greider is a little vague on just when that was.

Surely we are entitled to be upset at non-enforcement of the environmental laws, but just as surely we are not entitled to presume that democracy worked better when there were no environmental laws at all and factories polluted the air and water with impunity. Greider is able to report that political action committees associated with General Electric

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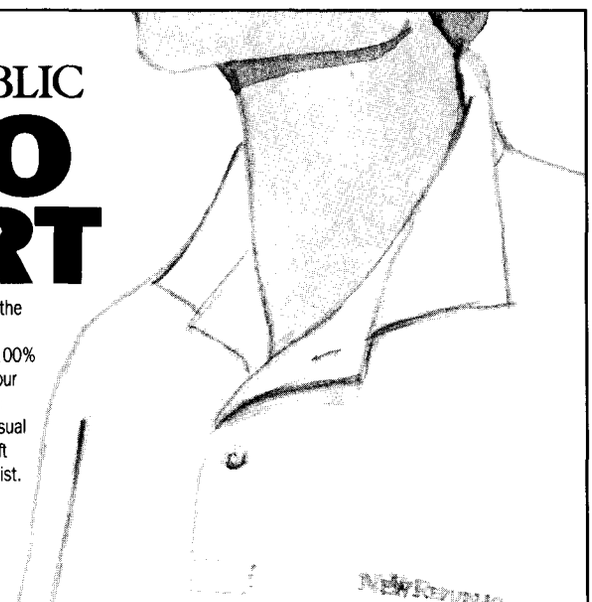

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poured nearly $600,000 into the 1988 congressional campaigns because the law required GE to disclose it. I agree with him that this represents a distinctly less than healthy attempt by a powerful corporation to buy legislative decisions. I cannot agree that it represents a "breakdown" from the days when corporations could stuff cash in congressmen's pockets and not even have to write it down. *That* happened, too.

When was it, exactly, that ordinary American people "spoke directly to power," in Greider's phrase, and played a central role in the decisions that shaped their lives? You can find a few such moments, and Greider scatters references to them throughout the pages of his book: in the Populist uprising of the 1890s; in the crucial years of the civil rights movement; perhaps for a while during the Depression. By and large, though, I think the burden of proof is on Greider to tell us what American democracy was like before it broke down.

He does not argue that the American political system of a generation ago (or any previous period) was a simple reflection of the will of the people. He does argue that ordinary people benefited, until fairly recently, from mediating institutions that spoke to power on their behalf. The Democratic Party, in cities all over the country, maintained an organizational structure that forced its elected officials to respond to the concerns of those at the bottom. In a curious burst of nostalgia for the era of political machines, Greider quotes a longtime Toledo congressman as saying, "We had precinct captains and twenty-two ward chairmen, and there were monthly ward meetings that you went home and talked to.... There's no longer the necessity for that. There's no political infrastructure to go back and report to."

Even more important, Greider believes, the collapse of organized labor has muted the one voice of ordinary people that spoke to power with its own combined arsenal of money, political organization, and raw voting strength. The AFL-CIO represented nearly a third of American workers in the 1960s; today it represents barely one-sixth. "A large segment of working-class Americans," Greider writes, "has effectively become invisible to the political debate among governing elites. They are neither seen nor heard nor talked about." In Greider's view, a whole array of governmental indignities visited upon the working class in the past decade—from increases in the Social Security payroll tax to sloppy enforcement of the environmental laws—can be traced to the erosion of unions as an effective political voice.

In the end, though, this is not really a call for the revival of labor unions or the Democratic Party. What Greider is passionate about is grass-roots action: clumps of ordinary citizens taking the process in their own hands. In the end Greider is, like most cynics about politics, an idealist and a romantic. "An active faith in democratic possibilities," he says in his last chapter, "dwells at the very center of the American experience. The first step toward renewal is to free ourselves of the cynical expectations of these times and to reassert that faith without hesitation or apology."

It is in that spirit that Greider writes of housing cooperatives in Brooklyn and the Bronx; of the residents of Love Canal, in the suburbs of Buffalo, who turned themselves into full-time environmental crusaders after their neighborhood was poisoned by toxic waste; of the ideological descendants of Saul Alinsky who are organizing the barrios in South Texas, assembling a grass-roots movement so democratic that its conventions produce scarcely any argument, so imbued are the delegates with the consensus of democratic faith. These are the heroes of this book and of Greider's worldview, the people who will save American democracy if anybody will. He stops short of predicting their success. "But, in the meantime," he says, "they stand as a living rebuke to the important political institutions that have failed."

In one respect, Greider is much more thorough than most of the current critics of the American governmental system. He is determined to examine corporate politics as well as governmental politics. He draws an extended portrait of companies that hide behind flimsy rhetoric of global competition to desert communities that they professed to care about; companies that lay off thousands of loyal and highly skilled employees and then complain piously about the low quality of the American work force. And he traces the ways in which government has encouraged such behavior. This is Greider at his most iconoclastic, and, it seems to me, at his best.

On one crucial point, however, he has much in common with other critics of American politics, right as well as left: however he happens to be defining "the people" at any given moment, he holds them essentially blameless for the predicament they are in. If Americans show little understanding of policy issues, it is because those in power have monopolized the information. If they don't vote, it is because they are disgusted with the lack of responsiveness of the two major parties. If they are sour and cynical, it is because the performance of the government has made them that way. "If the people sometimes seem dumb in public affairs," to use Greider's own words, "it is because no institution takes responsibility for teaching them or listening to them."

In making this argument, Greider finally meets, perhaps for the first time, a piece of conventional wisdom that he likes: the people are, if sometimes misguided, ultimately virtuous, and they want only the best. This is the fundamental assumption not only for him, but for some of the most influential journalistic critics of present-day politics, such as David Broder, Bill Moyers, and E.J. Dionne. In their view, the people have an underlying core of sound values, a sense of fairness, and an instinct for where the country ought to go. The politicians simply can't or won't follow them.

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This has been the conventional wisdom in America for longer than any of us can remember. It is part of our political culture. The United States has never run on populist economics, but it has always deferred to populism at the level of political creed. Alexander Hamilton may have called the people "a great beast," but there is no Hamilton Memorial in Washington. Jimmy Carter was never a more attractive figure to most of us than when he called for a government "as good and decent as the American people"; he was never less attractive than when he delivered his "malaise" speech, urging the citizens to begin questioning their own values.

There are few rewards for those who try to tell people they are getting the government they deserve. But in a book as ambitious as this one, the question merits some attention. Is anybody keeping the facts of government from us? Well, yes and no. The savings and loan crisis does seem to represent an informational breakdown; scarcely anybody talked about it, in Congress or in the media, until it was already a calamity. But how many public policy problems fall into this category? When millions of Americans lay the budget deficit at the feet of foreign aid or AFDC, or believe that $100 billion can be found by reducing bureaucratic waste, that is not an informational breakdown. That is a willful refusal to pay attention. The information is out there. Nearly all the tales of systemic governmental corruption that Greider gives us have been printed somewhere. I don't expect the average American voter to memorize *The New York Times* every day, or to jog to the cadences of "MacNeil/Lehrer," but it is only fair to argue that whatever information shortage exists in the electorate is as much a matter of demand as it is of supply.

Is it unresponsive government that is keeping people away from the polls, or is it something else? Our $400 billion budget deficit and prolonged dependence on Middle Eastern oil are hard to explain on the basis of unresponsiveness. They happened because the political system was hyperresponsive—subservient to every short-term whim and indulgence of the American people and afraid to impose any significant sacrifice. It is simply not credible that a generation of politicians bred and trained for reelection could get themselves and the country into so much trouble by failing to notice what the voters wanted. They have exquisite machinery for determining that, and they use it. What is credible is that they blundered by giving us exactly what we wanted, and don't know how to stop. We have a right to blame them for that, but we have no reason to excuse ourselves in the process.

Over and over again in this election year, we hear it reported with approval by public opinion experts that people have stopped voting because they no longer think their vote "makes a difference." There are nearly 200 million voting-age adults in this country. Every vote makes a tiny difference. Nobody has a right to expect his individual ballot to determine the outcome. We ought to stop indulging this silliness.

Nor should we indulge the idea, now expanding across the political spectrum from the extremes to the agitated middle, that it makes no difference which party wins. Even Greider would not argue—in fact he refutes—the proposition that Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, and the economic policy that ensued, made no difference in the lives of "real people" in America. The two parties may be equally in debt to corporate contributors, but the notion that they are programmatically the same, offered as an excuse for not voting, is preposterous.

People vote because of the ties that connect them to a mooring in life—a community, a family, a polity, a political association. Those ties have eroded in the past generation. We are a much more transient society than we were in 1960, not only physically but also emotionally. The more rootless people become, the more preoccupied they are with their individual needs and problems, the less likely they are to see any purpose in spending the time it takes to go to the polls. That isn't what they choose to say in surveys; they prefer to say that they don't vote because it makes no difference and all politicians are crooks. But the truth is more complicated, and in fact more troubling.

And here we come upon a crucial respect in which Greider's book, massive as it may be, nevertheless leaves something out. The problems of democracy are part of the changes of the past generation in American culture and values. Greider speaks of "the people" as some sort of Platonic ideal, but in reality they—we—do not deserve to be let off the hook that easily. Often "the people" get precisely the government they voted for.

The decline of political parties, the decline of unions, the abandonment of regulation, the empowering of a government that let bankers run amok and encouraged corporations to desert American towns for low-wage havens in the Third World—all these things are mixed up with the eclipse of community and the ascendance of individualist values in the years when Greider asserts American democracy has been breaking down. At times Greider himself comes close to saying this. "The isolation that haunts Americans in their social lives," he tells us at one point,

> is not really very different from the alienation that also undermines American politics. It is possible that Americans will be unable to repair their damaged personal relationships without eventually facing their deteriorated political relationships too.

This is precisely the point, but Greider never fully comes to grips with it. The deeper trouble is that all the most serious problems of American government in the 1990s—the erosion of authority, the absence of a long view, the decline of anything resembling consensus—are problems not only of American politics, but also of American culture. And that is the most depressing news of all.

ALAN EHRENHALT is executive editor of *Governing* magazine and the author of *The United States of Ambition* (Times Books).

Angel's Bakery

A dusty fan blows the smell
of hot bread into the black drizzle.
Through sooty windows nothing
but shadows are visible,
white in their hats and aprons,
moving as if underwater
to the strains of *Don Giovanni*
from a radio tucked among the ovens.
In the truck at the loading zone
the driver is slumped behind the wheel
with his cap pulled low.
His hands white as flour.
His chest so still he could be dead.
On the side of the building
there is a mural of Angel
faded by the elements.
She is young, with braided hair
the color of wheat and a sly smile.
A halo frames her head.
A boy with sweat pouring off
his temples wheels a cart
of bread out the corrugated door
and replies to anyone who inquires,
"There never was an Angel,"
as rain hisses on the steaming
loaves and the driver snaps awake,
gunning the truck's engine.

NICHOLAS CHRISTOPHER

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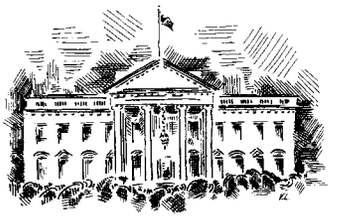
WASHINGTON DIARIST

L.A. F/X

IT'S TOO EARLY TO MAKE SENSE OF what happened last week in Los Angeles. It may always be too early. I'm still trying to make sense of what happened twenty-six years ago. It was the summer of 1966, the second of what would turn out to be four "long, hot summers" of looting and arson, insurrection and martial law, in what were then called the ghettos and are now known, more neutrally and therefore more numbingly, as the inner cities. I was a cub reporter for *Newsweek*, "covering," whatever that was supposed to mean, a riot in the Fillmore district of San Francisco. That night it meant standing in a littered intersection in the midst of a knot of a dozen police cars. The city all around was dark, with a touch of smoky orange from tear gas and a nearby fire, and weirdly silent. In the darkness a block or two away, large, indistinct crowds roiled and stared. The little police encampment, with its blazing headlights and flashing dome lights and crackling radios, seemed an island of safety. The cops conferred and then, in a matter of seconds, jumped into their cars and roared away, tires screeching. I was left behind in the street, surrounded by people and terrifyingly alone. The crowds began to move and grow. I heard the sounds of shouting and of breaking glass. A man, big and black, appeared in front of me and said through clenched teeth, "You got ten seconds to get out of here or you die." I ran, clutching my notebook and camera, ran as never before or since. Fortunately I had somewhere to run: four blocks away was the home of a family I'd interviewed a few weeks before, a black family. Somehow I made it to their door; they opened it and I fell through, gasping and choking. They took me in (a little brusquely at first); fed me; sheltered me for the night. Their home was another island of safety, a better and realer one.

THE MEMORY REMAINS VIVID, both of the fear and of the kindness. In his May 1 address, President Bush told a similar (though far more dramatic) story, about the horribly beaten truck driver who was rescued and guided to the hospital by four strangers. I suppose if I drew any lesson from my own much less awful experience, it was the same banal one put forth by Bush, namely that "simple human decency" can sometimes be found even in the midst of a "nightmare." The president also said that the Los Angeles rampage was not "a message of protest" but "the brutality of a mob, pure and simple." I guess one can't reasonably ask for subtlety in presidential statements of this kind, but the horror in Los Angeles was not pure and simple. Few things human are. Yes, the violence was brutal and criminal, pitiless and pitiful; it was many things, and one of them—on some level, in some way—was a "message of protest." Bush himself recognized as much when, in the same speech, he joined his stern condemnations of mob violence to a promise of federal action in the Rodney King case.



THE PRESIDENT MISSED some subtleties on the "good" side as well. Two of the four people who helped the truck driver had come directly from their homes, where they had seen his distress broadcast on television from a helicopter camera; but the other two were already in the street. It is possible verging on likely that one or both of them were part of the president's "brutal" mob until the moment they decided to help. The man who told me to run twenty-six years ago was part of such a mob; yet his warning was an act of empathy, however fleeting. The family that took me in did so in spite of its own anger that night at the police and at whites in general. "Human decency" is not "simple" either.

THE VIOLENCE IN L.A. WAS BOTH less and more frightening than the riots of a quarter century ago. Back then, the Vietnam War and the nuclear danger gave every outbreak of psychosis, mass or individual, a whiff of apocalyptic brimstone. Such notions as armed insurrection, urban guerrilla warfare, and incipient fascism were taken seriously by activists and government officials alike; so was the idea that poverty could be abolished. The range of possibilities, negative and positive, "revolutionary" and reformist, was seen on all sides as far broader than it is today. This is why the law'n'order reaction was stronger then than it is likely to be now. It is also why there were people of goodwill who "condoned" the riots, or who at least saw them as being part of the continuum of political action. This time there is no talk of "liberating" "the man's" sofas and groceries. Every black leader of note has condemned the arson, the looting, and the killing, Patrick Buchanan's angry assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. (Buchanan, already famous for '50s nostalgia, now seems to have become the last soldier of the '60s wars as well.) But the lack of sympathy for the rioters is as much a symptom of diminished expectations all around as it is of greater responsibility.

THE RIOTS WERE STRUCTURALLY different this time, too. The urban uprisings of the '60s turned into orgies of looting and arson, but they had, however fleetingly, some twisted hint of the *form* of political demonstrations. These riots had none of that. Members of gangs like the Crips and the Bloods—unimaginably alienated young men, organized in their alienation—apparently improvised a role as shock troops, smashing the windows and setting the fires. Normally law-abiding citizens then stepped over the shards to help themselves to the goods, for which express purpose they had left their homes. TV bulletins pinpointed looting sites and helpfully pointed out the absence of police. (The live coverage, as Jonathan Alter noted in *Newsweek*, thus "amounted to a home shopping network for crooks.") On television it all looked more like "Mad Max" than the Bastille.

TELEVISION'S ROLE IN THE KING trial and the subsequent explosion has been much chewed over in recent days. But one not so widely noted difference between now and twenty-five years ago is that we have all been subjected to a quarter century of brutalizing popular culture. In 1966 the sight of mock blood was rare on film and unknown on television. When the sheriff shot the bad guy, the bad guy said "Ugh," and fell down tidily. This was held to promote violence by sanitizing it; but at least real violence retained its power to shock. Now, on any given day, television (especially cable television) gives us hundreds of spectacles of bullet impacts, spouting gore, exploding skulls, faces and bodies pulped and bloodied. Movie policemen routinely curse their suspects, slam them up against the wall, break their noses, blow them away. It's hard to believe that all this hasn't had its effect on the cops who beat up Rodney King, the jurors who acquitted them, the citizens who rioted, and all the rest of us. Turning now to the news, we find exciting graphics ("Special Report: A City on Fire"), helicopter-taped beatings, shopkeepers firing from military stances, and the Rodney King "video." Just like the movie on HBO, only the special effects aren't as good. Hit the clicker.

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